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E WORKERS IN American History

By

JAMES ONEAL

NEW YORK
THE RAND SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
7 EAST 15TH STREET

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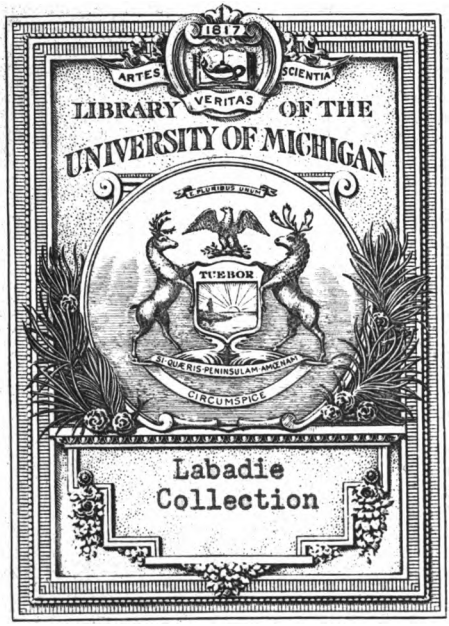

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New York, N. Y.

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THE WORKERS
IN
AMERICAN HISTORY

By

JAMES ONEAL

FOURTH EDITION

Revised and Enlarged

1921

PUBLISHED BY
THE RAND SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
7 EAST 15TH STREET

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PREFACE

In 1910 I wrote a small book of 136 pages bearing the title of this one and two editions were exhausted the following year. This booklet was devoted to the colonial and revolutionary period of American history, concluding with a short summary chapter.

In the meantime I had received many letters urging that in the next edition I should attempt to cover the period following the revolution. This I did by adding another chapter to the third and much larger edition which appeared in 1912. This edition was nearly exhausted late in 1914 and in the meantime lecturing and traveling did not permit me to further enlarge the book, as I was conscious of its limitations even with the added chapter on the post-revolutionary period. Then the world war brought with it soaring costs of publication and I was compelled to abandon any thought of another edition until its close.

This revised and fourth edition contains two additional chapters dealing with the modern period since the Civil War. Most of the preceding chapters remain as they were in the third edition, except for the correction of some minor errors of statement that had crept into the text and some abbreviations which, in making, have not made necessary the omission of any important fact or conclusion that appear in the last edition.

While the book is now a fairly complete survey of the workers in American history from settlement times down to a recent period, I am still deeply conscious of its imperfections. So much has been crowded into the pe-

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riod following the Civil War that the best I could do in the space available to me was to note some of the more important facts and tendencies relating to the history of the working class in this period. The period of the world war I have been unable to consider at all, except for an occasional reference to the modern history of the American Federation of Labor.

However, with its imperfections I am confident that this edition gives a fairly complete view of some of the more important and fundamental aspects of the history of the American masses down to a recent period. Readers will also find in the footnotes a guide to more extensive reading should they desire to further investigate the matters mentioned in the text. A Finnish translation of the book also appeared in 1913 and arrangements are being made for a Yiddish translation. It is probable that an Italian translation will also appear soon.

Here the writer may be pardoned for stating one weakness of every division of the labor movement in America. We have no historical traditions. No other labor movement in the world has a more rich, valuable and interesting historical background than the labor movement in America. Yet this background is practically lost to the present generation. This history must be written and rich materials are available for the purpose.

It is significant also that the scholarly "History of Labor in the United States" by Professor Commons and Associates did not appear until 1918. Not until modern "civilization" began to totter from the shock of the world war was a general history of the organized work-

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ers available in this country. Invaluable as this great work is, however, it is devoted mainly to the history of labor organization and not to the history of the working class in general. It is my own conviction that a general knowledge of the historical evolution of the American working class; its subjection to various forms of economic servitude in the colonies; its social and economic life at various periods in American history; its splendid achievements as an organized force in the three decades following 1828, and its subsequent history, would give the modern workers a historical culture that would add to their discipline and solidarity and enable them to march to the front as the most intelligent and progressive working class movement in the world.

Our large alien population makes this historical education especially necessary, although it may also be said that even the native workers need this almost as much as their alien brothers. The gross misconceptions of the American working class since the world war burst upon the world and the exotic programs offered in some quarters, indicate the vital need of understanding the historic backgrounds of the working class in America.

In the preparation of the present work I am indebted to my wife for her aid in typewriting the manuscript and for assistance in reading the proof and preparing the index.

JAMES ONEAL.

Brooklyn, March, 1921.

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To the workers of America, who are now besieged by the Powers that Prey, in the hope that this small volume will reveal to them how present tyrannies came to be and how they may be abolished.

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Chapter I

The European Background

To understand the history of America it is necessary to review briefly the main events in Europe which had a marked influence in shaping our destiny here. Masses of men do not emigrate to another continent merely for the love of adventure, especially when such emigration implies a hazardous sea voyage and the hardships of a wilderness inhabited by savage tribes. Influences more effective and less romantic brought hordes of workingmen to people the New World; influences that make one of the blackest pages in history, for they include the crucifixion and spoliation of a wealth-producing class. They led not only to the forcible exportation of pauperized workers, but inaugurated a slave traffic in white laborers that included kidnaping of men, women and children in European ports and selling them into temporary slavery in every American colony.

We may trace the beginning of this process with the year 1348, when the Black Death swept over Europe. It is estimated that fully one-third of the population perished of the plague. With the scarcity of laborers wages naturally began to rise. They rose thirty and even fifty per cent. The British Parliament, under the control of the ruling class, attempted to interfere with the "law of supply and demand." The famous Statute of Laborers provided that wages should be the same as two years before the plague, but the laborers succeeded in evading the law. The scarcity of laborers made higher wages inevitable and the employer connived with the laborer to violate the statutes as he considered himself fortunate to have any laborers at all. Conditions for the workers became so improved that this period came to be known, in England, as the Golden Age of Labor, an age when the highest well-being known to the poor was enjoyed. The old chroniclers frequently refer to it as "Merrie England." From the point of view of the hours worked and the purchasing power of the wages received, the in-

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come of these workers was the highest ever realized. Professor Rogers asserts that "The artisan who is demanding at this time an eight-hour day in the building trades is simply striving to recover what his ancestors worked by four or five centuries ago." The highest point reached was in the closing years of the fifteenth century. The sixteenth century brought with it the Reformation and the beginning of a series of acts that robbed the laborers of their advantages and forcibly transformed them into beggars and outcasts.[1]

The Catholic church was proprietor of a great part of the land of Great Britain. In fact, "The Church had become the largest land owner in all Western Christendom, nearly one-third of all the land in Germany, France and England belonging to her."[2] The suppression of the monasteries, which had been a refuge for the laborers in times of distress, threw masses of them on the market, helpless and dependent. The Reformation brought with it pillage and spoliation of church property. The estates of the church were given away to favorites of the court or sold to speculators who drove away the tenants. Seizure after seizure of lands was made. It was the beginning of an era of conquest which was to have the New World as its greatest prize. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries Parliament continued the process of pauperizing the masses by enclosing the common lands which had been at the disposal of the poor. These acts simply legalized the thefts, the ruling classes merely voting to themselves what they wanted.

There was the further process known as "the clearing of estates" which extended into the nineteenth century. Marx gives one classic example where the Duchess of Sutherland, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, with the aid of British soldiers, rooted out 15,000 people and took possession of nearly 800,000 acres of land

[1]See Rogers, "Six Centuries of Work and Wages."
[2]Kautsky, "Communism in Central Europe in the Time of the Reformation," p. 30.

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and transformed them into a sheepwalk. The good lady later entertained Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," by way of showing her sympathy with the abolition movement in America!

This driving of the workers off the land to wander as vagabonds on the highways had its counterpart in other countries. In 1452 "A similar though less influential part was played in many districts of Bohemia by the fishponds constructed by the landlords. If, as Thomas More said, the sheep ate up the peasants of England, those of Bohemia were equally devoured by carp."[2]

The ruling class, having reduced the workers to beggars and outcasts, began the bloody legislation on which rests many of the fortunes of British "gentlemen" today. A few examples from English history will suffice. A statute of Henry VIII in 1530 provided that beggars old and unable to work should receive a license. Whipping and imprisonment were provided for the able-bodied. They were to be "tied to the cart-tail and whipped till the blood streams down their bodies, then to swear on oath to go back to their birth place" and work. The oath they could not keep as the lands were confiscated and manufacture, then in its infancy, could not employ them. "For the second arrest for vagabondage the whipping is to be repeated and half the ear sliced off; but for the third relapse the offender is to be executed as a hardened criminal and an enemy of the common weal." The baptism of blood and fire continues, for a statute of Edward VI, nineteen years later (1549) gives power to the masters to enslave any worker whom they denounce as an idler. The master may force him to any work with whip or chains. If the worker absents himself for a fortnight he is to be branded on the forehead with a letter S and be a slave for life. The master can sell him or bequeath him to others. If the slave revolts he is to be executed. Anyone can take away the children of vagabonds and keep them as appren-

[2]Ibid, p. 77. See also Groat, "Organized Labor in America," pp. 5-7.

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tices. Similar laws were enacted in France, Holland, and the Netherlands. Organizations of laborers to improve their conditions were, in England, outlawed from the fourteenth century to 1825. The break-up of Feudalism and the Reformation, coming in the name of "freedom of conscience," released all the vilest passions of the dormant commercial classes who started their career of conquest and plunder with the methods briefly outlined above. They brought a scourge to the back of the laborer. The generation that came after the Golden Age was a landless, pauperized, vagabond host of beggars, crowding the highways of England, branded with irons for their poverty by the class that had reduced them to want, and "Merrie England" became only a memory.

Luther incarnated the interests of this pitiless ruling class. "He resisted every attempt of the lower classes to derive material benefit from the Reformation, by favoring each step taken by the Princes in this direction. *They* were to become the owners of the Church property, not the peasants. 'It is not our business to attack the monasteries,' he writes (1524), 'but to draw hearts away from them. When, then, churches and monasteries are lying deserted, let the reigning princes do with them what they please.' "[4]

It is not our purpose to attack Protestantism or its opponent, but merely to show that the "liberty" the former brought into the world was not for the workers. Their liberty, like their "salvation," was relegated to the "other world." Luther's crusade was the championship of a new ruling class that wished to throw off the old feudal restrictions. It stood for a new ruling class and its opponent defended an old one. "The religious reformation of the sixteenth century was not the cause, but the effect, of the social reformation that followed upon the shifting of the economic center from the manor to the city. And that was preceded by the rise of navigation and the discovery of the

[4]Kantsky, op. cit., p. 128.

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New World and new trade routes, which indicate the rise of manufacture."[5]

In France the reduction of the workers to beggary is a grim record of horrors. The frightful poverty of the peasants and laborers reached a depth perhaps unknown to any other country. Taine quotes La Bruyere who wrote in 1689: "Certain savage-looking beings, male and female, are seen in the country, black, livid, and sunburnt, and belonging to the soil which they dig and grub with invincible stubbornness. They seem capable of articulation, and, when they stand erect, they display human lineaments. They are, in fact, men. They retire at night into their dens where they live on black bread, water and roots. They . . . should not be in want of the bread they have planted." Taine adds: "They continue in want of it during twenty-five years after this and die in herds. I estimate that *in* 1715 *more than one-third of the population, six millions, perished with hunger and of destitution.*"[6]

By 1727 many live on the grass in the fields, which provokes St. Simon to declare that "The first king in Europe is great simply by being a king of beggars of all conditions." Another writer in 1739 mentions three famine insurrections. The Bishop of Chartres told the king that "the famine and the mortality were such that men ate grass like sheep and died like so many flies." Two years later one town of four thousand people has eighteen hundred poor. "The clothes of the poor are seized and the last measure of flour, the latches on their doors," etc.[7]

In Germany the thirty years' war, 1618-48, wrought terrible havoc, the peasants and laborers being reduced to conditions of suffering that words cannot exaggerate. Whole provinces were laid waste and transformed into deserts. "Friend could not be distinguished from foe, and men would wrest from their starving neighbors a crust of bread. It has been recorded that not even human flesh

[5]Dietzgen, "Philosophical Essays," p. 87.
[6]Taine, "The Ancient Regime," p. 329.
[7]Ibid, Book V, Chap. I.

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was sacred, that the gallows, and church-yards were *put under guard to protect them against theft by desperate, famine-stricken people.* Incredible as it may seem, in some instances even murder and cannibalism were resorted to. The neighborhood of the city of Worms . . . now afforded cover for a group of beggars, who fell upon passers-by and devoured their bodies for sustenance."[8]

The wars waged by Louis XIV on the Rhenish Palatinate, in 1674 and 1688, devastated that beautiful country to such an extent that it required two generations to restore it to its normal condition. Cities and villages were burnt, thousands were beggared, and lands were confiscated by the French king. Famine and pestilence were added to the other miseries of the unfortunate inhabitants. The invasions seemed to follow a settled policy. The people would no sooner recover from one than another would follow, with the customary pillage of crops and thefts of property. One French army gave seeds to the farmers for another harvest after having robbed the district.[9] The peasants, filled with despair, ceased to till the soil which only increased the general wretchedness. They were saddled with heavy taxes "levied to support an extravagant court that hunted, feasted and reveled until bankruptcy or revolution put an end to their riotous living."[10]

All this made the victims an easy prey to the emigration agents of William Penn who were in Germany engaged in an enthusiastic crusade in behalf of emigration to Pennsylvania. Penn had also won the admiration of Queen Anne, who was interested in his colonization plans so that "systematic effort was made to induce them (the Germans) to come to England in order to be shipped to America. Thus in the years 1708 and 1709 more than thirty thousand Germans crossed the Channel, and were

[8]Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, p. 56.
[9]Ibid, p. 58.
[10]Ibid, p. 59.

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soon afterward brought in English ships to New York and the Carolinas, but, above all, to Pennsylvania."[11]

It will be seen from this brief survey that all Europe was undergoing changes that transformed the peasants and laborers into homeless vagrants. Crowding the highways of every country, evicted from the common lands, their numbers constantly increasing, reduced to famine in France, cannibalism in Germany and starving outcasts in England, they turned eager eyes toward the New World. A virgin continent awaited them, a land that would serve as a basis for winning the peace and comfort which they had been denied at home. But their pleasant dreams were to be shattered. They did not know or suspect that the ruling classes would even coin their dreams into yellow gold, or that their wretched plight only served as another means of further enrichment for their home exploiters and for another type that awaited them on the shores of the Atlantic in the New World. These victims of class rule were destined to form the basis of a slave trade to recuperate the broken fortunes of a host of adventurers who carried them into a species of slavery on American soil that was, in some respects, as galling as that which they left behind. The character of this white slave trade and the servitude that was to be their lot will be described in a future chapter of this work.

[11]Fiske, "Dutch and Quaker Colonies," Vol. II, pp. 350-351.

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Chapter II

Land Conquests in America

A glamour of romance has grown up about the persons and deeds of navigators like Columbus, so that today they seem to tower above the rest of humanity in courage, endurance of hardships and sacrifice for ideals. They are regarded as disinterested pioneers prompted by the highest motives and inspired with the lofty desire of carrying civilization to barbarian peoples. Nothing is farther from the truth than this. "It is but a survival of the barbarian past to regard great historic names, not only as brilliant leaders, but also as demigods, though such opinions are still prevalent among many learned as well as ignorant men."[1] Columbus was only one of a number of navigators who were seeking a new trade route to India. The march of the Mohammedan hordes to the north out of Asia Minor had been going on for more than two centuries, when finally in the middle of the fifteenth century Constantinople fell into their hands and blocked the trade routes to India.

Goods from the East had for centuries reached Europe by one of the three general routes through Asia. The most southern was a sea route, except for its last few stages, extending from China, Japan and the Malay Archipelago to the Straits of Malacca. Indian and Arabian traders met the Chinese there, the former transporting their goods and trading at ports along the Malabar Coast to Ormuzin in the Persian Gulf. One line extended across the Arabian Gulf to the Red Sea, where merchandise was frequently carried by caravan to the Nile and shipped down that river to Cairo and Alexandria.

North of this ran another route, along which goods from the west coast of India reached the Persian Gulf and

[1]Dietzgen, "Philosophical Essays," p. 104.

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sailed north, touching a line of ports along the coast. These ports in turn were terminals of caravan routes from the interior of Persia and Northern India. One branch ascended the Tigris to Bagdad, then by land to Tabriz, then westward to the Black Sea or the Mediterranean. Another branch crossed the desert from Bassorah by camels to ports on the Mediterranean.

North of these routes was still another, having its source in the provinces of China and extending to the Caspian Sea. This route joined smaller ones running north from the interior of India. North of this main route was one running parallel to it until both formed a junction at Yarkand, in Turkestan.

"Along these devious and dangerous routes, by junks, by strange Oriental craft, by river-boats, by caravans of camels, trains of mules, in wagons, on horses, or on human shoulders, the products of the East were brought within reach of the merchants of the West." The streams of merchandise carried along these routes to the shores of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea were met by Italians from Pisa, Venice, or Genoa; Spaniards from Barcelona and Valencia, and others from Narbonne, Marseilles and Montpelier. The Germans crossed the Alps and took back with them goods for Germany, France and the cities of the Netherlands, while the merchants of the Hanseatic League carried supplies to England and the Baltic countries.

This traffic reached back for centuries and over these mediaeval trade-routes were shipped the luxuries of the East to the ruling classes of the West. These luxuries consisted of spices, drugs, dyes, perfumes, precious stones, silks, rugs, metal goods and fabrics. It was "the most extensive, and the most lucrative trade known to Europe."

About 1300 these routes began to be disturbed by the rise of the Ottoman Turks in the interior of Asia Minor. Within two centuries they conquered the countries on the eastern and southern borders of the Mediterranean, those clustering around the Black and Aegean Seas. The ports

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of northern Egypt, of Syria, Asia Minor, and those of the Black and Aegean Seas were controlled by the fierce Mohammedans and the ancient trade-routes from East to West were effectually blocked. The Turks "added to the Moslem contempt for the Christian the warrior's contempt for the mere merchant." Trade and culture had little attraction for them. With the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the transport of luxuries over the old routes was practically at an end. The demand for these goods in European markets could no longer be satisfied in the old way, and this provided the incentive for the eager search for new trade-routes to the Indies.[2]

The merchant traders had to seek new routes for their merchandise, and it was while seeking a westward route that Columbus made his discovery. So the lure of profits, not the love of adventure, was the primal cause of the navigators venturing out into unknown seas.

Events that followed the landing of the white man on the American continent also confirm this view. The era of colonization is an era of conquest, pillage, enslavement and robbery, the victims being the Indians and the great mass of pauperized workers crowding European shores. Columbus himself bears testimony to the sordid motives that guided his policies in the New World. Writing of the natives of one of the Bahama group of islands he informs the king that "Their conversation is the sweetest imaginable; their faces always smiling; and so gentle and so affectionate are they that I swear to your highness there is not a better people in the world."[3] Yet in his memorial of the second voyage to the Indies, dated January 30, 1494, and addressed to Ferdinand and Isabella, Columbus called attention to the prospects for gold in the island and to the Indians as a good source of slave labor. He asks for "cattle, provisions and other articles" which may be "sold at moderate prices for account of the bearers; and the latter might be paid with

[2] See Cheyney, "The European Background of American History," Chap. II, for maps of these trade routes and a general discussion of the subject.
[3] Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 239.

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slaves, taken from among the Caribbees, who are a wild people fit for any work, . . . who will be better than any other kind of slaves."[4] The advice did not fall on deaf ears. Commencing in 1509 "the Spaniards almost depopulated the islands; 40,000 of these innocent aborigines were carried away to a wretched death in the mines of Cuba."[5] What glorious work for a "Christian navigator" whose virtues are sung in every schoolroom in America!

However, in colonizing new countries, a ruling class is face to face with a problem that forces this conquest of barbarous peoples. The capitalist system can only gain a foothold in any new country by compulsory labor of one form or another. In the home countries the ruling classes are in possession of institutions based on thousands of years of history. Land and other forms of production are in the hands of the ruling classes, and there is no alternative for the workers but to work and produce surplus incomes for others. Customs, tradition, the schoolmaster and the church have in the meantime played their part in making these workers resigned to their fate. Their fathers had been poor, law and religion sanctioned it, and every educational agency had so perverted their perception of their interests that they not only accepted their fate, but shed their blood in behalf of those who lived on their toil. The workers were conquered, intellectually and morally.

But in new countries the institutions of class rule are absent. What exists is a virgin island or continent with natural resources awaiting the skill of men to transform them into the forms that serve the wants of mankind. The rivers and lakes, forests and harbors, fields and deposits lack the basic character of civilization: that is, they are not the property of a class. Hence, if wealth is to be accumulated in such countries the possessor thereof must acquire it by toil. If accumulation through ownership is to be realized —and this is the "ideal" of capitalist society—the land must

[4]Old South Leaflets, No. 71.
[5]Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 239.

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be seized and thus, by abolishing self-employment, enforced labor will be secured. "Law and order," with all its accessories, such as police, judges, armies, etc., will naturally follow to guard the conquest against the protests of the propertyless. This has been the historic process in every new country, including America.

It is not surprising, therefore, that advance agents of the merchant fleecers of Europe, like Columbus, facing the alternative of either working themselves or enslaving others, should choose the latter course. Besides, they left the Old World with other visions than a life of hardship and wealth acquired by hazardous toil. "Most of them were adventurers, who had embarked with no other expectation than that of getting together a fortune as speedily as possible in the Golden Indies. . . . From the first moment of their landing in Hispaniola they indulged the most wanton license in regard to the unoffending natives, who in the simplicity of their hearts received the white men as messengers from heaven. In less than four years . . . one-third of its population, amounting probably to several hundred thousands, were sacrificed! Such were the melancholy auspices under which the intercourse was opened between the civilized white man and the simple natives of the Western world."[6] The adventurers' thirst for gold prompted Winsor to characterize Columbus as "the man who was ambitious to become the first slave-driver of the New World."[7]

Unless the worker is enslaved or the masters make it difficult for him to have access to natural resources he will occupy the land, which costs nothing, rather than hire out to others and produce a surplus for them. If the capitalist could export all his institutions to the colonies, if he could call into existence almost over night private possession of resources and have police and military power to enforce obedience, he could start with what he calls "free labor"—that is, labor dependent on him in the beginning. This being

[6] Prescott, "Ferdinand and Isabella," Vol. II, Chap. XII.
[7] Winsor, "Life of Columbus," Chap. XII.

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impossible, all the twaddle about "free labor," which his intellectual police chant; is abandoned and the land is forcibly taken and slavery is introduced. These economic difficulties that faced the merchant adventurers in colonizing the New World, started them on their career of plunder. "The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of blackskins, signalizing the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production."[8]

The rulers of the Old World solved the question of conquering the New and securing slave labor in a characteristic fashion. They simply granted great tracts of land to broken-down court favorites and adventurers, transported their helpless paupers as slaves to America, and early in the seventeenth century began to raid Africa, transforming that country into a bloody shambles to secure further supplies of slave labor. We will notice the land policy first. It was easy to deprive the workers of the soil and make them dependent by giving the land outright to chartered companies of speculators. The charters usually gave exclusive powers of sovereignty over the domains within the royal grants, and rendered workmen dependent vassals. Most of the colonies were settled by these chartered monopolies. Just as the English ruling class confiscated the common lands and enclosed vast estates and transformed the laborers into vagabonds, so the land was taken from beneath the feet of the workers here. Many of the fortunes of settlement times came from these monopolies. The first charter of Virginia, granted by King James in 1606, may be cited as an example of the exclusive powers and privileges given to these adventurers.

This grant included an extensive domain along the Atlantic coast for over two hundred miles and inland one hundred miles, as well as the islands within one hundred

[8]Marx, "Capital," Vol. I, p. 479, Humbolt Edition.

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miles of the coast. The grant provided that the adventurers should have "all the lands, woods, soil, grounds, havens, ports, rivers, mines, marshes, waters, fishings, commodities, and hereditaments whatsoever." It further provided that no others would be permitted "to plant or inhabit behind, or on the back side of them, toward the main land, without the express license or consent of the Council of that Colony." They are granted the right to fortify their territory; to resist and expel on sea or land any person or persons who attempt to inhabit their domains or to annoy them in any way. They are empowered to confiscate any person or persons, ship or ships, vessels, goods and other furniture, which shall be found trading or trafficking in any harbor, creek or place within the limits of the plantation until they pay two and a half upon every hundred of anything by them trafficked, bought or sold. The loot realized from this legalized piracy went to the adventurers for the first twenty-one years; after that they sent it to the king. They were also exempted from paying any duties levied by the home goverment.[9] Corporate privileges more sweeping than these can scarcely be imagined.

The empire of these favorites extended from the mouth of the Hudson river to the southern boundary of North Carolina. John Smith catalogues those going to Virginia as "poor gentlemen, tradesmen, serving-men, and libertines." The workers, of course, were not included in the grant of privileges, as they invariably came as bond slaves of the "idle and dissolute adventurers, attracted solely by the hope of speedy fortune."[10] These had no intention of staying in the New World and share in the task of clearing the wilderness and making civilization possible. They left their wives and children at home in the expectation of returning soon with sufficient wealth to live a life of ease. The company was simply a commercial corporation, the main object of its existence being to swell the incomes of the shareholders. Much is said by historians regarding the religious

[9]Bryce, "The American Commonwealth," Abridged Edition, Appendix I.
[10]Lodge, "History of the English Colonies in America," p. 66.

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ideals which they assume inspired many to come to America. But whatever religious motives may have possessed the ruling classes and the adventurers it is certain that these served as a convenient shield for the visions of plunder that dominated their lives. Thirteen years after the founding of the colony a Dutch ship sailed into Jamestown and sold the first black slaves to Virginia planters. The same year, 1619, young girls were shipped from England and sold as wives in Jamestown for 120 pounds of tobacco, or about $80 each. A load of convicts also came and were sold into servitude. In 1692 an incident occurred that throws some light on the holy aspirations of the land conquerors. "When a delegation from Virginia were soliciting a charter for the College of William and Mary, on the ground that a higher education was necessary as a step towards the salvation of souls by the clergy, he (Attorney General Seymour) blurted out: 'Souls! Damn your souls! grow tobacco!' "[11]

The "adventurers" who "founded Virginia" never saw the American coast. They remained in England and invested their money in the venture, while others known as "planters" went as colonists. The history of the corporation is one of swindle and plunder. Many of the planters were defrauded of their proceeds of the venture. Many were induced to go to Virginia from England by deceptive advertisements that promised rich rewards, which were never fulfilled. A large number became mere company hirelings and others tenants. After 1610, one governor established a military system by which workmen were driven in squads to their daily tasks, and severely punished for disobedience. "A persistent neglect of labor was to be punished by galley service from one to three years. Penal servitude was also instituted; for 'petty offenses' they worked 'as slaves in irons for a term of years.' " The victims claimed that there were whippings, hangings, shootings and breaking on the wheel.

The administration of the colony resembled a prison

[11]Thwaites, "The Colonies," pp. 103-104.

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regime. One authority asserts that the colonist "was kept by force in the colony, and could have no communication with his friends in England. His letters were intercepted by the Company and could be destroyed if they contained anything to the Company's discredit. He was completely at the mercy of the edicts of arbitrary governors, and was forced to accept whatever abridgment of rights and contracts seemed good to the Governor and the Company. His true position was that of a common servant working in the interest of a commercial company. . . . His conduct was regulated by corporal punishment or more extreme measures. He could be hired out by the Company to private persons, or by the Governor for his personal advantage."[12]

So Virginia, based on conquest and tyranny, gradually developed into a class aristocracy that survived the Revolution of 1776, an aristocracy composed of an idle, fox-chasing, gambling, drinking, ruling class; served by black and white servile labor, controlling church and state, establishing customs, forming current opinions and ruling all classes below it; a society that had little to command our admiration and still less to elicit the praise of historians.

In 1681 Charles II gave William Penn a proprietary charter of 40,000 square miles in America to liquidate a claim Penn's father, an admiral in the British navy, held against the government. It was a habit in those days for British kings to pay debts or extend royal favors to friends by extensive grants of land, and these grants sometimes included land already given to other Englishmen. These conflicting grants frequently caused endless quarreling between rival claimants. It was an easy method of paying debts or advancing royal favorites. It cost kings nothing and only placed the poor, who emigrated to the New World, into the hands of the land kings. Penn proved to be one of the world's greatest land speculators and a promoter of trade in white slaves on a colossal scale, as we shall see in another chapter. Although the rule of Penn was mild compared with the Southern col-

[12]Ballagh, "White Servitude in the Colony of Virginia," Johns Hopkins University Studies, Chap. I.

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onies, the conditions under which the vagrant poor made the voyage to the colony were in some respects more inhuman than that which developed with the black slave trade.

In 1682 a pamphlet, the authorship of which is ascribed to Penn, appeared. This was followed by many others, all of them being distributed throughout Europe, but especially in Germany. One authority passes the following judgment on the first document mentioned: "The scheme here proposed is to induce men of wealth to take up large tracts of land, and to encourage those of little or no means *to settle thereon for the benefit of the rich.*"[13] The pamphlet was carefully written and the terms of settlement for the poor stated in language that would appeal to them. The emigrant was given to understand that here was a rare opportunity to escape the oppression of the Old World and win economic independence. "The dark side of colonial life—subduing the forest, the constant fear of savages, the want of facilities incident to a sparse population—was not represented to them in the mass of literature which advertised the new colonies. For unfavorable reports were carefully suppressed by those whose interests lay in the settlement and growth of the colony."[14]

To further stimulate immigration, agents were sent abroad to induce people to go to America. These were often in the employ of ship captains, the latter promoting the scheme because of the large profits in it. The agents were known as "Neulanders" (Newlanders), who received a commission for every one they induced to make the voyage. They resorted to many tricks and devices to increase their incomes. They dressed well and paraded gaudy jewelry to impress their victims with the belief that gold and opulence were easily obtained in America. Letters entrusted to the Neulanders to friends in Europe were opened, and if they contained the truth as to conditions in the colonies they were rewritten by the sharks. Abbe Raynal, writing of these

[13]Karl Frederick Geiser, "Redemptioners and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania," p. 10.
[14]Ibid, p. 12.

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infamous practices, said: "Simple men seduced by these magnificent promises blindly follow these infamous brokers engaged in this scandalous commerce."[15]

The drain on the population of Germany became large enough to rouse the resentment of the ruling classes who feared an undersupply of laborers and a rise in wages as a consequence. Literature giving a more accurate account of conditions in America was spread broadcast and laws passed prohibiting the trade of the emigration agents. A colonial newspaper in 1751 contained the following announcement: "The Elector Palatine has issued a command that no Neulanders are to be tolerated in the whole of the Palatinate; that if captured they shall be thrown into Prison."[16] But mandates of princes or other rulers only succeeded in forcing the agents to work in secrecy, and literature continued to be circulated by them. One pamphlet states that cows roam on excellent pasturage the entire year, honey is found in hollow trees, there are wild turkeys in flocks of five hundred, and geese in two hundred. Buffaloes place their heads through cabin windows, bears are smaller and herd with swine, while the alligator is harmless and its tail is good for food.[17] With such tricks and deceptions thousands were lured to the colonies and embarked on a voyage that made them thank their God the moment they were free of the white-slaver ship captains.

New Netherlands (later New York) was perhaps the nearest approach to the establishment of a feudal regime in America, and remnants of the feudal privileges granted early in the seventeenth century survived the first quarter of the nineteenth century. This province, like Virginia, became a class aristocracy, though, unlike the latter, black slaves did not play any large part in its history. New Netherlands constituted the section of land that the ruling class of Holland, through its States General, took for itself. The Dutch West India Company, a chartered corporation of Holland,

[15] Quoted by Geiser, p. 19.
[16] Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, p. 62.
[17] Ibid, p. 64.

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decided in 1629 to give "any member of the company founding a colony of fifty persons the right to an estate with a river frontage of sixteen miles, and of otherwise indefinite extent, while with these estates went every sort of feudal right, including manorial courts and the privilege of trading within the dominions of the company."[18] The title was made perpetual and the monopoly of trade exclusive except that in furs. . . . In these grants the resources of wealth and political power are given with a stroke of the pen to the proprietors. It required no iron collar about the neck of the worker to emphasize his status as a serf under these grants. Out of these little land kingdoms sprang a powerful landed class with mighty estates along the banks of the Hudson, surrounding themselves with courts in imitation of the ruling princes of the Old World.

Six years later still greater privileges are granted to the adventurers. Anyone establishing a colony of forty-eight adults is given six years to pay. No one could approach within eight miles of the grant without the proprietor's consent. "He and he only was the court with summary powers . . . which were harshly or capriciously exercised. Not only did he impose sentence for violation of laws, but he, himself, ordained those laws. . . . He had full authority to appoint officers and magistrates and enact laws. And finally he had the power of policing his domain."[19]

The only redress the workers on these domains had was to appeal to the New Netherlands Council, but the adventurers generally succeeded in avoiding this by binding the settlers before starting out not to exercise this right.[20] It is not surprising, therefore, that the land kings "encased themselves in an environment of pomp and awe. Like so many petty monarchs each had his distinct flag and insignia; each fortified his domain with fortresses, armed with cannon and manned by his paid soldiery."[21] Neither are we surprised that any man or woman servant could not leave the

[18]Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 286.
[19]Myers, "History of the Great American Fortunes," Vol. I, p. 16.
[20]Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 199.
[21]Myers, p. 21.

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master if the latter violated the terms of the contract, or that the master "forced his tenants to sign covenants that they should trade in nothing than the produce of the manor; that they should trade nowhere else but at his store; that they should grind their flour at his mill, and buy bread at his bakery, lumber at his sawmills and liquor at his brewery."[22]

This work of seizing the land as fast as the laborers could be shipped to America placed the latter as securely in the grasp of a colonial ruling class as the evictions from the common lands in Europe did the workers there. In addition to the confiscation was the bond slavery of thousands enforced by the voyage to the colonies. We reserve the discussion of this white slavery for another chapter. It remains for us to briefly consider a few of the other royal grants that established broken libertines, adventurers, and speculators as masters over the workers.

In 1629 Charles I granted to Lord Baltimore and his heirs the present state of Maryland, and a large part of what is now the state of Delaware. His son succeeded to his titles on his death. "The proprietor could declare war, make peace, appoint all officers, including judges, rule by martial law, pardon criminals and confer titles."[23] The Maryland grant was another "business enterprise." To get workers for the colony the purchase of land was not encouraged down to 1682. Land was given in proportion to the number of white slaves imported into the colony by adventurers. The first adventurers were allowed 2,000 acres for a yearly rent of 400 pounds of wheat for every five servants imported, 100 acres for less than five servants at a yearly rent of 20 pounds of wheat, and fifty acres for those importing children less than sixteen years of age. Those who came later received half as much land and the rent was increased from 400 to 600 pounds of wheat. The labor of white slaves formed a lucrative commerce in their transportation and "regular con-

[22]Ibid, p. 46. See also Thwaites, p. 199, and Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 327.
[23]Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 82.

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tractors began to import them to sell to the planters and themselves receive the certificates for the lands."[24]

Maryland society later became similar to Virginia, though it may be said that the ruling class of both colonies did not make any pretensions of democracy such as the Puritan aristocracy of New England did. In Maryland there was a savage law code against the black slaves, while the white slaves included imported convicts who worked on the roads in gangs, loaded with irons, and were frequently employed in building houses for the great planters. The other white slaves were kidnapped in Europe, a "business" which we will discuss later. Those who made the voyage to Maryland of their own accord were usually the victims of the emigration agents, who falsified the contracts and added to the terms of servitude.[25]

The Maryland clergy aped and served the ruling class with a degree of servility perhaps unequaled in any other colony. It was no uncommon thing for them to be found drunk or to extort marriage fees from the poor and refusing to go on with the ceremony until their demands were granted. They "set decency and public opinion at defiance. They hunted, raced horses, drank, gambled, and were the boon companions of the wealthy planters. . . . They became a by-word in the other colonies, and every itinerant clergyman who was a low fellow and a disgrace to his profession passed under the cant name of a 'Maryland parson.' "[26] With the land and political power in the hands of a few slave masters and a rotton clergy to chant their praises, there was little hope for the workers of Maryland, even if large numbers of them were not in a species of slavery yet to be discussed.

In 1629 Charles I granted North Carolina to his attorney general, as "the province of Carolana," on condition that he should colonize it within a reasonable time. The condi-

[24] See McCormac, "White Servitude in Maryland," John Hopkins University Studies, Chap. 2.
[25] Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 126.
[26] Ibid, p. 123.

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tion was not complied with, but settlers, who by 1663 had purchased land from Indians, were robbed by Charles II, who gave the territory to eight royal favorites, "gentlemen who had done him inestimable services." The following year the speculators secured a new charter, which granted to them additional land, which included the southern half of what is now the United States and which was intended to extend as far west as the Pacific.[27] This colony developed the most atrocious type of slavery, a type that scarcely had a redeeming feature. The cultivation of rice and indigo in the swamp lands of the colony proved deadly to white men, so that early in the eighteenth century the demand for black slaves was enormous. By 1765 they numbered more than 100,000. In one year the slave would produce more rice than sufficed to pay his value. In other words, *it became profitable to work the slaves to death.* The rich planters did not live on the plantations in the swamps, but retired to Charleston, leaving overseers in charge. The slaves became prematurely old, presenting a marked contrast to the slaves of the other colonies. In Charleston the masters lived a life of ease, attended by slaves, drinking, gambling, and attending dinners, balls and concerts. Their lives were dissipated and drunkenness in that climate usually brought early death. "Their mortality was so marked that the women, who contented themselves with . . . water . . . always married two or three times."[28]

These chartered companies of rich freebooters played an important part in settling North America. About fifty or sixty of them were chartered by England, Holland, France, Denmark and Sweden, all of them being inspired by the prospect of fortunes to be secured from the traffic.[29] In many cases they held almost feudal powers, and were thinly disguised plundering expeditions, operating under the sanction of law. They were "primarily commercial bodies seeking dividends, and only secondarily colonization societies

[27]Ibid, p. 125.
[28]Ibid, p. 185. See also Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 99.
[29]See Cheyney, "The European Background of American History," Chap. VII, for a list of these corporations.

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sending over settlers."[30] When Marx said that capital came into the world "dripping with blood and dirt, from every pore," the statement was as true of its origin here as in Europe.

The examples of wholesale confiscation of land in America suffice to show the methods employed to establish an aristocracy of wealth and to render poor immigrants from the Old World dependent on the land kings. The first forms of capital, instead of being based on "thrift," "industry," and hard work, were accumulated through theft, piracy and fraud. The former theory is taught in the schools and the latter by history. The schoolmasters and historians have employed such skill in telling of the past that the land conquests do not linger even as a memory with the laborers today. It was not so in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The first great labor movement in America, beginning in the first quarter of the last century, had not forgotten the methods of the colonial masters in enslaving the workers. For example, the Workingmen's Party, in New York, in 1829, declared "that the first appropriation of the soil by the state to private and exclusive possession was eminently barbarous and unjust. That it was substantially feudal in character, inasmuch as those who received enormous and unequal possession were *lords*, and those who received little or nothing were *vassals*."[31] The workers of today have forgotten this historical truth which their fathers proclaimed nearly a century ago.

The confiscation of land did not stop with the original charter grants. It was continued by royal governors sent to America by the rulers of Europe. As fast as the frontier was pushed westward, land was given by governors to speculators or sold to them, or the Indians were given whiskey and when they recovered from their stupor found they had been traded or cheated out of their lands. One authority says: "Broken-down court favorites considered an appointment to

[30] Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 165.
[31] Myers, "History of the Great American Fortunes," Vol. I, p. 172.

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the colonies as governor a means of retrieving fallen fortunes, and made little attempt to conceal their sordid purpose. The members of the council were often admitted to a share of the spoils, and official morality was much of the time in a low condition."[32] Colonel Fletcher, one governor of New York, was a conspicuous example of these grafters. Governor Bellomont, in 1700, one of the few honest governors of that time, repeatedly wrote to the Lords of Trade in London calling attention to Fletcher's acts. Fletcher "was in league with the pirates who infested the coast, openly sold them licenses, and is even said to have shared their spoils; while at the same time he plundered the revenue and connived at smuggling and every sort of illicit trade.[33] He also gave great tracts of land away for trifling sums. In 1698 Bellomont charged Fletcher with having embraced a notorious pirate who had returned from India with plunder; that he sold protections commonly rated at $100 per man; that protections were publicly offered for sale at these rates, and that other officials shared in the graft.[34]

By the middle of the eighteenth century land speculating companies came into existence. The Ohio company, of which George Washington become a prominent member, was organized in 1749. King George generously gave these speculators 500,000 acres, on which they were to plant one hundred families and maintain a fort.[35] In 1787, while Washington was presiding over the secret constitutional convention at Philadelphia, the agent of the company, Manasseh Cutler, a preacher (!), was in New York, "steering" through Congress what McMaster calls "the first great 'land job' of the republic." This steal was accomplished with all the arts of the professional lobbyist, many members of Congress sharing in the spoil. Five millions of acres of land were disposed of at two-thirds of a dollar per acre, but as payments were made in depreciated currency, *the real*

[32] Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 110.
[33] Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 301.
[34] Hart, "American History Told by Contemporaries," Vol. II, pp. 245-246.
[35] Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 283.

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price was not far from eight or nine cents per acre.[36] While Washington was serving his first term the same corporation. in 1792, secured another concession of nearly one million acres, paying for it in certificates of public debt and army land warrants purchased at a heavy discount.[37] Enormous profits were made by the speculators. They constituted a strong element of the ruling class during the colonial period and long after the Revolution. We shall later see a land and navigation corporation initiating a movement that resulted in the meeting of a constitutional convention behind closed doors at Philadelphia.

Land grants and steals in behalf of adventurers and speculators have continued down to the present day. It would be tiresome to review the different methods by which wholesale thefts of land have been accomplished, and particularly with the rise of railway corporations. That these thefts have not ceased is evident from the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy that disturbed the dull routine of Congress in 1910. Most of the railway companies have either stolen great tracts of land or had their agents in legislative bodies vote land to them. The same is true of land speculators and other groups of "public spirited" pilferers.

We have briefly traced the causes that led to the discovery and settlement of America and found them to lie in the commercial interests of the ruling classes of Europe. The rise of the Ottoman Turks blocked the trade-routes over which had flowed for centuries the costly foods, drugs, jewels and other luxuries that gave ease and comfort to manor lords, princes, kings, and others of the ruling classes. Then came the feverish search for new routes by water, the fact that the earth is round having become generally accepted among educated men at that time. The discovery made by Columbus followed in its natural order. The news of a vast continent to the West naturally conjured dreams

[36] McMaster, in his "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, pp. 507-513, gives a very interesting account of the entire transaction.
[37] Myers, "History of the Great American Fortunes," Vol. II, p. 16.

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of gold and conquest, and the chartered corporations, clothed with all the powers of government and sharing their plunder with kings and emperors, were a logical sequence of the preceding events.[38]

Commerce and profits are the guiding motives of ruling classes since the passing of feudal society, and these motives guided the "statesmanship" of the powerful men who landed in America, representing, as they did, commercial corporations financed in the European countries. Enough has been said to show that, in the main, since the white man landed on American shores, the natural resources of this country have been appropriated by ruling classes and their kin because they had the power to take them. Possessing political power and excluding the workers from the franchise, it was easy for the wealthy classes to legalize their methods and enforce their conquests with the civil, police and military powers which control of government gives. It now remains for us to consider the character of the white servitude established by the colonial rulers and the "fathers" of our country.

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[38]We have quoted a number of authorities to vindicate this judgment. The following will also be interesting to the reader: "Of South Carolina, the first settlement was founded by the proprietors, and resembled in its origin an investment of capital by a company of land jobbers, who furnished the emigrants with the means of embarking for America, established on its shores their own commercial agent, and undertook for themselves the management of all commercial transactions."—Bancroft, "History of the United States," Vol. II, p. 166.

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Chapter III

White Slavery in the Colonies

Marx has said that "A great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any certificate of birth, was yesterday, in England, the capitalized blood of children."[1] The same holds true of men and women of other countries of Europe. By the beginning of the seventeenth century the beggared population of England became a "problem" to the ruling class. The extension of the wool trade gave added stimulus to the eviction of the poor from the land and transforming great estates of fertile soil into sheep pastures. The gulf between the plunderers and their victims widened and the desperate poverty of the latter increased the fear of labor revolts. "Colonization was thought by many to be the only means of obtaining permanent relief from the pressing political and economic dangers of pauperism."[2] But even this pauperism was not permitted to be an unprofitable by-product of land thefts. The American colonies were regarded as a convenient dumping ground for these unfortunates, so that between the years 1661 and 1668 various proposals were made to the king and council to constitute an office for transporting to the plantations all vagrants, rogues and idle persons that could give no account of themselves, felons who had the benefit of clergy, and such as were convicted of petty larceny—such persons to be transported to the nearest seaport and to serve four years if over twenty years of age, and seven years if under twenty. It was poor wretches like these in England, Germany and other countries who were seized upon to provide white slave labor for the colonies.

This cheap, servile labor was essential to the society

[1]Marx, "Capital," p. 479. Humbolt Edition.
[2]Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 65.

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planted by the corporations in the New World. Transported laborers could not be held to their tasks of producing wealth for others unless prevented by force from producing for themselves. The natural resources were corporate property before the workers touched the Atlantic Coast, while their beggared condition forced them to sell themselves to pay their cost of transportation across the seas.

There were several classes of these slaves and perhaps the best general description of their servitude is given by the historian, McMaster. After describing the status of the black slaves he says:

"One step above these slaves were the convict bondservants, or men and women in a state of temporary involuntary servitude. These people were either political offenders or felon convicts. Those guilty of political offenses, as the Scots taken in battle in 1650, the prisoners captured at the battle of Worcester in 1651. Monmouth's men, 1685, the Scots concerned in the uprising of 1678, the Jacobins of 1716, the Scots who went out in 1745, were, of course, of this class of offenders; and during that period, between 1650 and 1745, as many as four thousand are known to have been sent over to this country.

"The felons formed the great source of supply, and had been sent over in very considerable numbers from the earliest days of colonization. . . . One historian of Maryland declares that up to the Revolution twenty thousand came to that colony and half of them after 1750. Another authority . . . asserts that between 1715 and 1775, ten thousand felons were exported from the Old Bailey Prison in London. . . .

"But the indentured servant and redemptioner did not cease to come when the colonies became the United States. Speaking generally, the indentured servants were men, women and even children, who, unable to pay their passage, signed a contract called an indenture[8] before leaving

[8]The name comes from the practice of tearing the contract into two halves, with jagged edges; the master kept one and the slave the other.

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the Old World. This indenture bound the owner or master of the ship to transport them to America, and bound the emigrant after arrival in America to serve the owner, or their assigns, for a certain number of years. On reaching port the owner or master, whose servants they then became, *sold them for their passage to the highest bidder, or for what he could get.*

"The redemptioner, on the other hand, was an immigrant who signed no indenture before embarking, but agreed with the shipping merchant that after reaching America he should be given a certain time (generally a month) in which to find somebody to redeem him by paying the passage money, or freight, as it was called. Should he fail to find a redeemer within a specified time, *the ship captain was at liberty to sell him to the highest bidder.* . . .

"When a ship laden with one to three hundred such persons arrived, we will say at Philadelphia, the immigrants, arranged in a long line, were marched at once to a magistrate and forced to take an oath of allegiance to the king, or, later, to the United States, and then marched back to the ship to be sold. If a purchaser was not forthcoming . . . *they were frequently sold*[4] *to speculators who drove them, chained together, sometimes through the country, from farm to farm, in search of a purchaser.*

"The contract signed, the newcomer *became in the eyes of the law a slave,* and in both the civil and criminal code was classed with negro slaves and Indians. None could marry without consent of the master or mistress under penalty of an addition of one year's service to the time set forth in the indenture. They were worked hard, were dressed in the cast-off clothes of their owners, *and might be flogged as often as the master or mistress thought necessary.* . . .

[4]These dealers in white slaves were known as "soul drivers" and were cordially hated by the workers throughout the colonies.

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Father, mother and children could be sold to different buyers."[5]

The only difference between these white slaves, sold in American ports, and the blacks was that the slavery of the whites was limited and the blacks were slaves for life. The white slaves were sold in all the colonies, though New England's supply was smaller than the middle and southern colonies. It may be said with truth that both black and white slaves formed the basis of the landed aristocracy of the colonies before and long after the Revolution. Yet this fact is suppressed by most historians in order that historic figures, who witnessed the auction of white laborers without a protest, and some of whom were interested in the traffic, might be glorified. It was a modified form of chattel slavery and admirably served the purposes of the classes who confiscated the land or inherited it from those who did. With the resources of life in their hands and whites and blacks held in servitude, the ruling classes had all the advantages that the masters of any age might wish.

But we have not exhausted our review of the life of these forgotten white slaves in quoting McMaster's excellent summary. The oldest document recognizing the existence of Harvard college is a pamphlet entitled "New England's First Fruits." It is dated "Boston, Sept. 26, 1642," and gives an account of the experience and needs of the settlers. One of their appeals to Englishmen is to stir up "some well-minded to cloath and transport over poore children, Boyes and Girles, which may be a great mercy to their bodies and soules."[6] It would thus seem that New England "democracy" was alive to the value of bond-labor. It also became the fashion to place paupers up at public

[5]McMaster, "The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," pp. 32-35. This book is a scholarly summary of the economic, social and political status of the workers from the Revolution to the middle of the nineteenth century. If the facts given by the author were generally known by workingmen they would revolutionize the popular conception of American history. It seems, therefore, more than a coincidence that the book, published in 1903, has been limited to 500 copies!

[6]Old South Leaflets, No. 51.

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auction in Boston and other New England towns and *sell them to the lowest bidder for their support.*[7] New Jersey[8] followed this simple Puritan plan as did New York,[9] where their children were also sold as apprentices. New England "democracy" found its way over into Pennsylvania and blessed the workers there with its presence. We are informed that in this colony "The class of indentured servants was not recruited from immigrants alone. The courts of this period (1684) and for many years after, *frequently sentenced freemen to be sold into servitude for a period of years in order to liquidate fines or other debts.* . . . ; orphan children were brought to the court to be 'adjudged,' there being on one occasion, in the Chester county court, in 1697, *thirty-three whose terms of service were fixed by the court.*"[10] It was New England "democracy" that also set the fashion in punishing offenders with whipping, branding, cropping, mutilation, the pillory and the stocks.

The fact that white servitude was not as general in New England as in the colonies to the South, does not necessarily mean that "free labor" was allowed to reap the regard of high wages that usually comes of a scarcity of labor. *The Puritan aristocracy met this scarcity by fixing wages by law.* As early as 1633 Massachusetts Bay colony adopted a statute commanding that carpenters, sawyers, masons, bricklayers, tilers, joiners, wheelwrights, mowers and other workmen were not to receive more than two shillings per day, each paying his own board, or if furnished with living they might receive fourteen pence per day. The constable and two others associated with him was to fix the rates of pay of inferior workmen in the same occupations. Other classes of workmen also had their wages fixed by law. An employer who paid more than the legal rates, as he would be tempted to do during a brisk demand for labor, or the workman who accepted wages higher than the legal rate, were both subjected to penalties for violating

[7] Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 441.
[8] Ibid, p. 276.
[9] Ibid, p. 327.
[10] Geiser, "Redemptioners and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania," p. 28.

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the law. Lest these regulations might provoke the workers to refuse to work at all the "virtues" of thrift and industry were encouraged by providing that there should be no idleness, and the workman who indulged in this peculiar privilege of the aristocracy was subjected to a penalty fixed by law.

One year after the passage of this act there was an increase in the demand for labor and the clause penalizing the employers for paying wages higher than the legal rates was repealed. The towns were then authorized to appoint a board of three men to fix wages when the employers and workmen failed to agree. As the workers had no political power it is evident that the town boards always represented the masters and any interference was seldom to their disadvantage. While the employers were exempt from penalties for violating the act *the workmen continued to be fined.* The law was later repealed, but another took its place in 1636, giving towns jurisdiction in fixing wages. But in 1640 prices collapsed and there was danger of the workers reaping some benefits from the lower prices. The colonial legislature then went over the heads of the towns and *commanded the workmen to reduce wages to correspond with reduced prices* and those who failed to respond were fined as usual.[11]

Massachusetts at the same time bound out criminals to labor as apprentices. The whipping post was in frequent use to punish servants, and when whipped the term of servitude was doubled. The towns also legislated in the matter of wages; Dorchester, for example, in 1641 orders common laborers to work for certain rates during the year, the first period, March to August, for 28d. a day; the second, August to October, 15d. a day; the third, October to December, 12d. a day, and the fourth, December to March, 15d. a day.[12] Connecticut also fixed the wages of workmen in 1641. Workmen were also subject to compulsory serv-

[11] See Carroll D. Wright's "Industrial Evolution of the United States," Chap. IX.

[12] Weeden, "Economic and Social History of New England," Vol. I. p. 173. See also Channing and Hart, "American History Leaflets," No. 31. January, 1901.

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ice for the towns or for private employers, the impressment being enforced as though it were a military duty. The laborers were worked at regular harvest wages fixed by statute.

The fining of laborers for evading the statutes and allowing the employer to go free was frequent. "The contrast in treatment of employer and employed, in the attempt to fine one and not the other for the same offense, reflects the notion of the time regarding labor."[13]

Work was plenty in New England and laborers were not sufficient to serve the needs of the employing class. The real wage was low as "the workingman was obliged to pay comparatively high prices"[14] for everything. Agricultural laborers received wages from 1752 to 1760 averaging thirty-one cents per day; butchers in 1780 were paid thirty-three and carpenters fifty-two cents. On the eve of the Revolution (1774) the wages in the colonies were about seven shillings, a sum less than two dollars per week, and "on such a pittance it was only by the strictest economy that a mechanic *kept his children from starvation and himself from jail.*"[15]

Although black and white slave labor were not abundant in New England, the policy of fixing wages by law gave the ruling classes all the cheap labor they desired. These facts compel one conservative historian to admit that "An aristocracy unquestionably existed in New England from the beginning, always possessing great power, and fully recognized."[16]

These is abundant evidence to show that the life of the indentured slaves was hard and cruel. In fact, some of the legislation applying to them recalls the bloody legislation against the poor in the Old World. There are, of course, some works that have come down to us that give a favorable

[13]Weeden, "Economic and Social History of New England," Vol. I, pp. 82-83.
[14]Wright, "Industrial Evolution of the United States," p. 110.
[15]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, p. 96.
[16]Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 442.

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picture of the life of these slaves, but in most cases these works were written by those interested in the white slave trade or their agents, and are, therefore, untrustworthy. Lucy Maynard Salmon in her excellent book[17] mentions a number of these works. The fact that today glowing accounts are sent by ship agents and capitalist firms to European countries advertising alleged opportunities in America, indicates that modern sweaters are merely following the example of the Puritan slavers of two centuries ago.

The laws directed against disobedience and misdemeanors of white slaves were rigorous. Those calling for the severest punishments were generally offenses against property—the god of capitalist civilization. In Virginia, in 1610, pilfering on the part of launderers, laundresses, bakers, cooks and dressers of fish is punished with whipping and imprisonment; for purloining flour and meal given out for baking purposes, *offenders have their ears sliced off;* for the second offense a year imprisonment and for the third offense, three years. This brutal treatment produced a reaction and by 1700 laws were being enacted prescribing limits to the punishment allowed and in some cases providing penalties for violation of the acts . The laws included better provision for their food, clothing, shelter and medical attendance; against bodily maiming, whipping without the consent of the proper authorities and other regulations which throw considerable light on the treatment they were subjected to.

Fugitive slave laws as applied to these slaves were a part of the legislation in all colonies. The laws generally provided penalties for both fugitives and those who gave them shelter or aided them in any way to escape. The penalty for fugitives generally included an addition to their terms of servitude which varied in each colony. Advertisements appear in all the colonial newspapers. The following from the Virginia *Gazette* (Williamsburg), July 14, 1737, may be cited as an example of hundreds:

[17] "Domestic Service." In the third chapter the author gives an interesting digest of laws in the colonies applying to white slaves.

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"Ran away some time in June last from William Pierce of Nansemond county, near Mr. Theophilus Pugh's, merchant; a convict servant woman, named Winifred Thomas. She is Welsh woman, short, black hair'd and young; marked on the inside of her right arm with gunpowder W. T. and the date of the year underneath. She knits and spins, and is supposed to be gone by the way of Cureatuck and Roanoke inlet. Whoever brings her to her master shall be paid a pistole besides what the law allows, paid by William Pierce."[18]

It will be noted that this woman serf had her initials and the date when she was purchased branded on her right arm.

Virginia had an elaborate code fixing the status of white slaves and some features were shocking in the extreme. Among the large number of laborers who left Europe were individuals who had acquired a good education and were fully competent teachers. These had either failed in higher pursuits or being convicted of some offense had been shipped to Virginia and sold as convicts. It was not unusual, therefore, for a wealthy planter to purchase an educated man as a teacher for his children. They were subjected to corporal punishment the same as other servants. The number of lashes was administered in installments of ten strokes at different intervals, thus rendering the punishment doubly excruciating.[19]

One of the common offenses in the 17th century was bastardy, due in part to the degraded character of many servants, men and women, who came or were shipped to the colony, and the fact that many of the women were at the mercy of their masters and forced to enter into illicit relations with them. Masters also opposed marriage among the women servants as this often meant an interruption of their work through confinement and the birth and care of children, while the death of a mother meant the loss of the sum

[18]"Documentary History of American Industrial Society," Vol. I, p. 346.
[19]Bruce, "Institutional History of Virginia," Vol. I, p. 621.

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invested in her. Their indentures often rendered it difficult to marry. "Many of this class of women were exposed to improper advances on their masters' part, as they were, by their situation, very much in the power of these masters, who, if inclined to licentiousness, would not be slow to use it." The work in the fields and barns and associations after their hours of labor also rendered them easy victims of the lowest class of brutalized laborers and masters.

Numerous laws were passed to punish the crime of bastardy. Anthony Delmasse and Jane Butterfield were each given thirty lashes in 1642 for this crime and separated until legally united. The punishment of women offenders was generally more severe than for men, the latter generally escaping by paying a fine or some other form of punishment. Sometimes the man was only required to appear before the parish church and confess his sin, while the woman was given a brutal whipping. In 1649 a woman was given fourteen lashes, while the father of her child was sentenced to build a bridge across a creek.

"After the middle of the century, the offense of bastardy became more frequent than ever, owing to the rapid increase in the number of female domestic and agricultural servants, who were imported into the colony." In 1663 fourteen cases were tried in one county at one session of court, and in 1688 at least three servant women of one master gave birth to illegitimate children.[20]

One important duty of the church wardens was to see that the parish was saved from expense in cases of bastardy. When a female servant gave birth to a child, the father of which was her master, they were authorized to sell her for a period of two years, the sum being paid in tobacco to the parish. Sometimes they compelled the father to give bond that the child would not become a charge of the parish during the servitude of the mother. Occasionally, when masters were fined for this offense the violated mothers were required to repay their masters by an extension of their terms of servitude.

[20]Bruce, "Institutional History of Virginia," Vol. I, Chap. V.

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Near the close of the century, church wardens were empowered to bind out illegitimate boys until they were thirty years old. Their power to enforce this with regard to orphan children until they were twenty years old was also frequently exercised. Poor children, whose parents were unable to provide for them properly, were also bound out for a long term of years.[21]

One historian affirms that "By the acts giving the master additions of time for the birth of a bastard child to his servant, a premium was actually put upon immorality, and there appears to have been masters base enough to take advantage of it."[22]

The frequency of runaways brought about the pass system by which persons leaving the colony were required to secure a pass. Other punishments, such as whipping, branding on the cheek with the letter R, increasing the term of servitude from two to seven years, sometimes served in irons, were provided for those who were taken up as runaways.[23]

There was always the temptation for masters to harbor runaway slaves because of the scarcity of labor and each colony prescribed penalties—generally fines—for offenders. Maryland punished slaves, who aided fugitives, with lashes, not to exceed thirty-nine, on the bare back. The colonial legislatures also provided standing rewards, some payable in cash, others in cloth or tobacco, to those who aided in the capture of runaways. Fugitive and disobedient servants, as they were usually called, suffered humiliating corporal punishment prescribed by law. This generally took the form of public whipping, the number of lashes being prescribed as in the case of North Carolina where the justice of the peace directs the constable to give strokes "not exceeding the number of thirty-nine, well laid on, on the back of such runaway." Bartering with white slaves or

[21] Ibid, Vol. I, Chap. IX. Prof. Bruce's work is a great achievement and contains a mass of information bearing on the status of servants.
[22] Ballagh, "White Servitude in the Colony of Virginia," p. 79.
[23] Ibid, pp. 54-57, passim.

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buying from them is a crime punished with fines or whipping or both. Other harsh laws were enacted tending to make more secure the servitude of these unfortunates.

The attempt in North Carolina to establish a feudal system rendered the workers subject to manor lords who could not leave the master's land without written permission. Here the laws regarding bastardy were similar to Virginia's, the offending masters who violated their female servants generally escaping punishment while the mother was sold and the money went into the coffers of the church. An act of 1741 stated that "Whereas many women servants are begotten with child by freemen or servants, to the great prejudice of their master or mistress whom they serve," etc. The language indicates that seduction of girls was not an unusual thing.[24]

In Maryland they were generally worked without mercy. A document written in 1679 states that "The servants and negroes (in Maryland), after they have worn themselves down the whole day, and gone home to rest, have yet to grind and pound the grain, which is generally maize, for their masters and all their families as well as themselves, and all the negroes to eat."[25] Working under such harsh conditions it is not surprising that runaways were numerous. In fact, they became so frequent that it became hazardous for anyone to venture on a journey, especially if poorly clothed, as it was the custom of sheriffs to lock such suspicious characters up. They were then advertised in the papers and in some cases, if no owner was found within a certain time, *were sold to defray their charges.*[26]

For a time Maryland made desertion by a servant punishable with death, and those aiding fugitives were subject to the same penalty. This law was superseded a few years later by one which provided that fugitives should serve double the time of their absence and pay the costs and dam-

[24]Bassett, "Slavery and Servitude in the Colony of North Carolina," Johns Hopkins University Studies, Chap. V.
[25]Hart, "Source Book of American History," p. 50.
[26]See Hart, "American History Told by Contemporaries," pp. 299-300, where advertisements of colonial newspapers are given.

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ages by servitude. The pass system was also adopted and some of the colonies entered into agreements for the return of fugitive servants. Maryland offered standing rewards to the people of other colonies for the capture of runaways and a captured freeman who could not pay the costs was sold into servitude.[27] Some of the more degraded type of women servants in Maryland contracted marriages with slaves and a law of 1664 required that such women should serve their masters during the life of their husbands, while the children of such marriages became slaves for life. "Instead of preventing such marriages, this law enabled avaricious and unprincipled masters to convert many of their servants into slaves."[28]

The ruling classes of the colonies were interested in uniform laws for recovering fugitives, but found it difficult for the various colonies to co-operate in their apprehension. To aid in making better defense against the Indians and to assist each other in the capture of runaway servants, a confederation of the New England colonies was formed in 1643. Section 8 of the Articles of Confederation *provided a uniform fugitive slave law for all the colonies to aid in recovering white runaways for their owners.* The section reads as follows:

"It is agreed that if any servant runs away from his master into any other of these jurisdictions, that in such case, upon the certificate of one magistrate in the jurisdiction out of which the said servant fled, or upon other due proof, the said servant shall be delivered, either to his master or any other that pursues and brings such certificate of proof."[29]

There is abundant testimony to indicate that the aristocracy in many respects not only regarded some classes of white slaves as beneath the blacks, but that the latter also, in some cases, felt a sense of superiority. One authority says: "The negro slave might take a certain sort of

[27] McCarmac, "White Servitude in Maryland," Chap. V.
[28] Ibid, Chap. VI.
[29] Bryce, "The American Commonwealth," Abridged Edition, Appendix III.

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pride in belonging to the grand establishment of a powerful or wealthy master, and from this point of view society might be said to have a place for him, even though he possessed no legal rights. There was no such haven of security for the mean whites. If the negro was like a Sudra, they were simply Pariahs."[30] Again, speaking of the whites, the same writer says: "Their lives were in theory protected by law, but where an indented servant came to his death from prolonged ill-usage, or from excessive punishment, or even from sudden violence, it was not easy to get a verdict against the master."[31]

In Pennsylvania fugitives received five days' additional servitude for every day of absence by flight and were whipped for theft at the cart-tail. A severe penalty was also provided for marrying without the master's consent, and women having illegitimate children were punished by adding more days to their time of service. *White slaves were also recruited from the offenders who could not pay fines and were sold into servitude.*[32]

For trifling offenses the masters were able to prolong the period of servitude fixed in the indentures which rendered the lives of white slaves miserable in the extreme. Loosely drawn indentures also placed them at the mercy of the owners. This was particularly true of Virginia, the "Mother of Presidents," where they were also "coarsely clothed, and fed upon meal and water sweetened with molasses; and were frequently punished with great barbarity."[33] In Virginia and Maryland the redemptioners outnumbered the negro slaves until the latter part of the seventeenth century, and the traffic in them continued well into the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Virginia, like Massachusetts, made provisions against revolt of its serfs early in the history of the colony. "Not only to speak evil of the king, but even to vilify the London company, was a treasonable offense, to be punished with death."[34]

[30] Fiske, "Old Virginia and Her Neighbors," Vol. II, p. 189.
[31] Ibid, p. 178.
[32] Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 245.
[33] Ibid, p. 70.
[34] Fiske, "Old Virginia and Her Neighbors," Vol. II, pp. 164-165.

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In South Carolina the white slaves were mostly redemptioners. The masters were at liberty to whip them; no one was allowed to trade with them and their travel was limited. When their terms expired they were soon lost among the small farmers and poor whites. In North Carolina corporal punishment was frequently resorted to, and if the bond slave ran away *he had to serve a double term when caught.* "If a woman servant gave birth to an illegitimate child she was to serve an additional term, and if the master was the father, *then she was sold by the church warden for the public benefit.*"[35]

In Georgia the slave code was similar to North Carolina and Virginia. The white slaves of Georgia and other colonies frequently escaped to the Spanish border and led a wild, barbarous life, repaying their former masters with brigandage and robbery. When these vagabonds were captured, whipping, branding irons and the pillory were employed to teach them the error of their ways. But the Georgia border continued to be a turbulent section even after the Revolution. It was from these white bond slaves that the mass of "poor whites" in the mountain districts of the South were recruited. Owing to the existence of negro slavery, to work for a living became a badge of shame and the "poor whites," long after the redemptionist and indentured system disappeared, were still regarded as mudsills by the slave-owning aristocracy and were shunned as though they were beasts. In fact, before the Civil War, it was no unusual thing for a slave owner to hire out his negroes to other employers *for terms much higher than what the poor whites could get.* A few examples will suffice. "Sober, energetic white men, engaged in agricultural pursuits at $84 per annum—including board; slaves . . . who performed little more than half the amount of labor . . . were hired out on adjoining farms at an average of $115 per annum, including board, clothing and medical attendance. Free white men and slaves were in the employ

[35] Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 155.

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of the North Carolina Railroad company; the former . . . received only $12 per month each; *the masters of the latter received* $16 *per month for every slave so employed.*"[36] White girls, as domestics, received $10 per annum and board, while slaves, for the same service, were hired out for $65 to $70 per year, including board, clothing and medical attendance. Many of these "free" whites passed through life without ever owning so much as five dollars. "Thousands of them die at an advanced age, as ignorant of the common alphabet as if it had never been invented. All are more or less impressed with a belief in witches, ghosts and supernatural signs."[37]

It may not be amiss here to state that many men who were prominent in the Revolution profited from this system of servile white labor. For example, George Washington, in 1774, wrote a ship captain expressing his desire for a supply of servants to place on his Ohio lands. He writes of his desire to import them at his expense, "where they are unable to transport themselves, into the Potomac river, and from hence to the Ohio; to have them, in the first case, engaged to me under indenture, in the second, by some other contract equally valid, to become tenants upon the terms hereafter mentioned." *The terms suggested are that the slaves jointly bind themselves to reimburse Washington for any losses he might sustain by deaths or accidents.*[38] This proposed toll of death or disease was probably suggested by the inhuman practices of the ship captains engaged in the white slave trade.

Before Benjamin Franklin became an advocate of popular views in the Constitutional Convention, he was not averse to "turning an honest penny" by speculating in the

[36]Helper, "The Impending Crisis of the South," p. 380. This book, the work of a Southerner, was written a few years before the Civil War to show the superiority of wage labor over slave labor. It had a great deal of influence in forming opinion regarding slavery. A tragic coincidence is that Helper, after having played such an important part in giving capitalism a free field for development in America, was unable to succeed under the new regime and, in April, 1909, blew his brains out in Washington, D. C.!

[37]Ibid, p. 380.

[38]See Hart, "American History Told by Contemporaries," Vol. II, where the letter is reproduced.

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traffic of servant contracts. Some masters in moving from one colony to another, or for other reasons, sold the unexpired indentures of their servants for what they could get for them. This gave rise to an internal trade in these contracts and speculators bought them up and sold them for such profits as the market conditions would permit. Franklin, when proprietor of the "Pennsylvania Gazette," occasionally purchased slaves or the time of redemptioners and advertised them for sale in his paper. "Likely negro wenches" were advertised for sale in the same columns with white boys and girls and sometimes, when the trade was not brisk, they were sold at public auction.[39] Later in life Franklin became opposed to slavery and was active in the agitation against it.

Many tragic as well as humorous incidents accompanied the system of white servitude. One authority relates how one "soul driver" in Pennsylvania was tricked by a shrewd Irish redemptioner he was trying to sell. The servant "by a little management, contrived to be the last of the flock that remained unsold, and traveled about with his owner without companions. One night they lodged at a tavern, and in the morning, the young fellow, who was an Irishman, rose early and sold his master to the landlord, pocketed the money, and marched off. Previously, however, to his going, he used the precaution to tell the purchaser that his servant, although tolerably clever in other respects, was rather saucy and a little given to lying—that he even had presumption enough at times to endeavor to pass for master, and that he might possibly represent himself so to him. By the time mine host was undeceived, the son of Erin had gained such a start as rendered pursuit useless."[40]

One gentleman in the city of Philadelphia wanted to buy an old couple for house servants. An old man, his wife, and daughter were offered, and after paying the price *he discovered he had bought his father, mother and sister!*[41]

[39] Heston, "Slavery and Servitude in New Jersey." On pages 24-25 Heston gives a list of such advertisements from Franklin's paper.
[40] Geiser, "Redemptioners and Indentured Servants in Pennsylvania," p. 54.
[41] Ibid, p. 55.

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Generally speaking the white slaves remained in poverty, after they worked out their terms of service. The system being devised to serve the material interests of land speculators, rich planters and others of the employing class, had little in it to stimulate ambition to be something in the world. The period of slavery, carrying with it the shame and humiliation of a subject class, left most of them dull and shiftless when they were released. Many of them formed the historical source of the "poor whites" of the South,[42] a melancholy class of workers who still form a part of the population of the Southern states, and of which we will have more to say in another chapter. Out of their sufferings and those of the blacks arose the aristocracy of Southern planters, the New York land kings, and the fishing, commercial and slave-trading aristocracy of New England. A few of the slaves became distinguished. George Taylor, a Pennsylvania redemptioner, was one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. Matthew Thornton, a signer from New Hampshire, also belonged to this class, as did Charles Thomas, secretary of Congress during the Revolution, and General Sullivan, a commander in the Revolutionary war.[43]

Prof. Marion Dexter Learned of the University of Pennsylvania in his book, "Abraham Lincoln—An American Migration—Family English, Not German," traces Lincoln's genealogy back to Samuel Lincoln, who sailed from London, April 18, 1637, as servant of Francis Lawes. Samuel Lincoln, the white serf, was the great-great-great-great-grandfather of Abraham who fell a victim to the slave power.[44]

During the American Revolution the white slaves as well as the blacks were a source of dread to those sections of the aristocracy who were active in the movement for separation from Great Britain. There was the constant fear that during these turbulent times the slaves would desert their owners and fight with the British. The officers

[42] Bassett, "Slavery and Servitude in the Colony of North Carolina," p. 85.
[43] Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 109.
[44] See review in the "New York Times Saturday Review," February 12, 1910.

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of the British army were not slow to take advantage of the situation and offer inducements to the servile population to join in the struggle to subdue the colonial masters. Lord Dunmore, governor of Virginia, in 1775, published a proclamation declaring martial law and proclaimed freedom "to all indentured servants, negroes or others appertaining to rebels" who would "join for the reducing of the colony to a proper sense of its duty." Washington received this news with alarm and referring to Dunmore, wrote "that man . . . will be the most formidable enemy of America if some expedient cannot be hit upon to convince the servants and slaves of the impotency of his designs."[46]

No doubt many took advantage of the British offer of freedom, but thousands also joined the American forces to escape the service of their masters, believing that independence would also bring freedom. A law of Virginia was enacted—perhaps to counteract the effect of Dunmore's proclamation—providing that all white servants would be freed who enlisted in the Revolutionary army.[46] It was the farmers, laborers and bond slaves who made up the bulk of the fighting forces under Washington and his generals. Ida M. Tarbell, in her story of "The American Woman,"[47] tells of a "bound girl," Deborah Sampson Gannett, who used the first money she earned at teaching to buy cloth with which she made herself a suit of men's clothing and enlisted in the army under the name of Robert Shurtleff. Wounded twice, her sex was not discovered until the Yorktown campaign, when she was seized with brain fever. She was later voted a pension by Congress.

The Revolution brought few changes for the better for white slaves. The traffic in them continued and the laws affecting them remained on the whole about the same. What few laws were enacted making the lives of the unfortunates less wretched were not initiated by the men who were mouthing phrases about "liberty," but by charitable

[46] Geiser, "Redemptioners," pp. 100-101.
[46] Lecky, "The American Revolution," p. 285.
[47] "The American Magazine," November, 1909.

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societies of Germans and other nationalities whose experience and observation revealed the sufferings their enslaved countrymen were forced to endure. As early as 1764 the Germans of Philadelphia organized the first of a number of societies in the seacoast cities to improve the lot of redemptioners. By constant agitation they succeeded in abolishing some atrocious abuses that had developed with the traffic.[48]. One writer[49] mentions the sale of one German Swiss and two French Swiss from a ship in Philadelphia in August, 1817. Another[50] asserts that the sale of redemptioners was abolished in 1820. Still another states that though the system was declining, "the German redemptioners are mentioned in statutes of Pennsylvania as late as 1818, and the registry of redemptioners at Philadelphia shows that the last servant was bound in 1831."[51]

In other words, *a half century had passed into history since the adoption of the Declaration of Independence, which declared "all men are free and equal," and yet the purchase of white flesh had not become extinct.*

This general subjection of white immigrant laborers, together with the kidnaped blacks, was a factor second in importance to the conquest of natural resources in making a ruling class possible. Both gave wealth, power and influence to an aristocracy in all the colonies and, together with political privileges, based on the ownership of property, placed the governing powers in the hands of the masters so that the legislation of the colonial period reflects the property interests that ruled. Cheap slave labor was essential to the continuance of class rule until the control of natural resources had extended far enough to permit the system of indentured service to die. With such control the masters could gradually release white slaves in a market fairly well stocked with "free laborers" compelled to compete with each other for employment.

[48]Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, pp. 71-72.
[49]Salmon, "Domestic Service," p. 20.
[50]Faust, p. 72.
[51]Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 42.

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Of course, there was the western frontier for the oppressed to move to, but here also there were two factors at work, after the passing of indentured service as well as before it, which made the free lands of the West largely a myth of the historians. One was the continued confiscation or acquirement by fraud or bribery of the western lands by land speculators and land corporations and the consequent exploitation of the more daring and rebellious who advanced into the wilderness. The second was the policy of the colonial rulers in dealing with Indians. The frontier settlements were continually exposed to attacks by Indians and massacres frequently took place. The aristocracy controlling the legislatures, before and after the Revolution, seldom provided the military protection these settlements required. In 1794 the settlers at Lexington, Kentucky, adopted revolutionary resolutions, declaring that "the protection of the frontier was a duty of the United States government."[52] Early in the same year a debate in Congress disclosed the miserable wages paid even those who engaged in protecting the frontier. "Each private at that time received every four weeks, as compensation for the hunger and privations he suffered at the frontier posts, a sum not so great as is now paid for three days of toil. *His hire was three dollars a month.*"[53]

This wretched remuneration was calculated to discourage enlistments for frontier duty. The "free laborer," therefore, had the alternative of staying within reach of the masters and working for them, or moving out into the forests to incur the danger of massacre by savage foes. This frontier policy was one cause of "Bacon's Rebellion" in 1676, which we will consider in another chapter.

[52]Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, p. 379.
[53]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. II, p. 178.

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Chapter IV

The White Slave Trade

"The history of our colonization is the history of the crimes of Europe."[1] By "Europe" the American historian means the ruling classes of Europe, for the serfs and artisans of the European countries certainly had no share in the crimes that accompanied the settlement of the colonies, but were the victims of these crimes.

In considering the slave trade it has been the fashion to dwell entirely on the traffic in negroes, and as this traffic at one time or another was indulged in by the ruling classes of most modern nations, no special discredit attaches to America and its rulers. In fact, one may easily find graphic descriptions of the horrors of this trade. It is certainly revolting to know of the slave raids in Africa by men trained for their work; of the crowding of vessels with slaves to the limit of their capacity; how the stronger strangled the weaker to get more air; how the stench from below was so great that the slavers could not stand near the hatchways; how the steaming bodies of the dead were constantly cast into the sea; or the wretched spectacle of the half-starved survivors—frequently only one-third of those who embarked—who were finally sold to Southern planters. We may even recoil from the inhumanity that prompted slavers to chain an entire cargo of these unfortunates to an iron cable and with a blow of an ax send them to the bottom of the sea.[2]

[1]Bancroft, "History of the United States." Vol. II, p. 251.

[2]"Ethiopia, Her Gloom and Glory," pp. 82-83. This is an interesting series of lectures delivered by David Christy for the Colonization Society before the Civil War. The author regarded the slavery question as the old conflict between "evil and good," or as a consequence of "the Fall of Man." Yet the lectures are brilliant in their portrayal of the economic basis of slavery and emancipation. For example, British emancipation in the West Indies instead of inducing the negroes to work long hours for wages resulted in them working only three or four days in the week, and only five or six hours each day, just enough to supply their simple wants. The rest of the time they spent under shade trees. Christy remarks that "they have no stimulant to perform an adequate amount of labor." In other words, to supply his own wants is not "adequate." The proper "stimulant" was later provided with capitalist production when both blacks and whites sold themselves daily for wages and produced surplus incomes for British exploiters in addition to their own subsidence.

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But atrocious as these practices were it is doubtful whether they were not equalled by the practices of the men who engaged in the business of transporting white slaves from European countries to America. The demand for servile labor in a sparsely settled country and the struggle to share in the large profits growing out of the traffic, made abuses inevitable. The gains of the trade took the curse off, for "it takes men a weary while to learn the wickedness of anything that puts gold in their purses." (Fiske.) Fortunately for the ship captains and speculators, as we have seen, the economic changes taking place in Europe provided them a large supply of helpless poor to draw upon.

The London company of adventurers who settled Virginia was eager to employ child labor in developing the resources of the colony. In 1619 its records acknowledge the arrival of one hundred children, "save such as dyed on the waie," and another hundred, twelve years old or over, is asked for. In 1627 many ships arrived, bringing fourteen and fifteen hundred children *kidnaped by "spirits"*[3] *in European ports,* and a few years later they sent a request to London for another supply of "friendless boyes and girles."[4] In England Bristol was one of the last cities to give up the traffic in white children sold in American colonies. This city for several hundred years remained a white slave market, where it was "no uncommon thing to behold young girls exposed for sale."[5] By 1664 the kidnaping had increased to such proportions that the committee for foreign plantations interfered, and an office was created with the duty of "keeping a record of all persons going to America as servants, and the statement that they had voluntarily left England." A penalty of death was later provided for kidnaping,

[3]The term had its origin in the skill and cunning employed by the kidnapers who "spirited" away their victims. Ship captains would send their crews ashore to steal children and, in many cases, adults, who were sold in America. These "spirits" were a source of terror to the poor in those ports which the slavers visited.

[4]Abbot, "Women in Industry," pp. 332-333.

[5]Washington, "The Story of the Negro," Vol. I, p. 111.

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yet *"ten thousand persons were annually kidnaped after the passage of the act."*[6]

Paupers were turned over to corporations, prisons were emptied, and convicts were reprieved to supply the demands of those engaged in the trade.[7] Servants shipped at an expense of eight or ten pounds were sometimes sold for forty, fifty, or sixty pounds, and even higher rates. "Like negroes, they were to be purchased on shipboard, as men buy horses at a fair."[8] In England men of high positions at the court scrambled for a share in the profits to be secured from the trade in prisoners of war. The mayor of Bristol and other officials terrorized petty offenders into praying for transportation; they "were then divided among members of the court."[9] This traffic proved more profitable than the slave trade. So profitable, in fact, that those engaged in it were able to evade, or even suspend, the law which in 1670 provided the death penalty for kidnaping. One authority states that the offense was treated with "remarkable leniency by the courts." Under the Civil Law it would have been punished with death, but we meet with petty fines of a few shillings, even when the 'spirit' confessed the crime, and in one case only 12d., a few hours in the pillory, or imprisonment till the fine was paid seems to have been considered by the judges a sufficient atonement. The Session Rolls of Middlesex show that a large number of the cases were not even brought to trial, though true bills had been brought against the offenders."[10]

The practice of forcible exportation of poor wretches was taken advantage of by wealthy persons. Those belonging to the upper classes and having family skeletons to conceal or inheritances to secure or some criminal scheme to advance, had objectionable members of their class or

[6]Salmon, "Domestic Service," p. 22. See also Fiske, "Old Virginia and Her Neighbors," Vol. II, p. 177; Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 74, and Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 21.
[7]Cheyney, "European Background of American History," p. 169.
[8]Bancroft, "History of the United States," Vol. I, p. 175.
[9]Ibid, Vol. I, p. 176; Vol. II, p. 251.
[10]Ballagh, "White Servitude in the Colony of Virginia," p. 38, footnote.

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family seized and transported to America and sold.[11] A niece of Daniel Defoe, the English author, left England in 1718, and having no money to pay her passage, was sold by the ship captain at Philadelphia and later married a relative of her owner.[12]

We have already mentioned the Neulanders and their work in Europe in stimulating emigration. Though they circulated stories of opportunities to be had in America they were invariably failures themselves, and took up slave-hunting as a profession. Advertising of various kinds was distributed broadcast and the emigration from Germany threatened to depopulate the provinces. The Neulanders received a commission for every person they pursuaded to emigrate, generally three florins or a ducat in Holland, while the merchant in Philadelphia sold them for sixty or eighty florins each in proportion to the debt incurred by the emigrant on the voyage. One Scotchman, in the middle of the eighteenth century, tells of his being kidnaped and, after a six months' voyage, being sold into seven years' servitude at Philadelphia for sixteen pounds.[13] From 1682 to 1804 the proportion of white slaves to the whole number of immigrants to Pennsylvania steadily increased, *till they constituted two-thirds during the last nineteen years.* This enormous exodus from Germany and Holland is suggestive of the work of the emigrant hunters in these countries.

These agents came mainly from Pennsylvania as representatives of William Penn or land speculators who had secured land from the immense domains he possessed. Early in the eighteenth century the migration from Rotterdam and then to London reached enormous proportions. Five thousand arrived in the latter city during May and June, 1709. This number was doubled by August and two months later thirteen thousand were in London. Still the stream of deluded poor swelled. So great was the exodus that it became a serious problem to feed them while waiting

[11]Salmon, "Domestic Service," p. 21
[12]Heston, "Slavery and Servitude in New Jersey," p. 27.
[13]Geiser, "Redemptioners," pp. 20-21.
[14]Ibid, p. 41.

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for ships to transport them to America. "Starvation staring the needy Palatines in the face, England for months provided them with food. Having no homes, they were sheltered in barns, empty dwellings, warehouses, and a thousand tents taken from the army stores. The queen allowed each ninepence per day for subsistence, and such lodgings as could best be obtained. The paupers of London grew envious of the provision made for the foreigners, and filed complaints against such exceptional treatment."[15]

The great numbers congregated in London were transported to Ireland, Louisiana and other places, while Governor Hunter of New York contrived to have three or four thousand sent to that colony. Over half of them died of the overcrowding and disease of the ship. Some were placed upon the great Livingston estate, where the exploitation was so severe that they deserted. Some secured land of the Indians, but after planting crops were informed by the Governor that their titles were void and that they must pay for them. A few submitted and the rest again pushed into the wilderness.[16] This process of invalidating titles by grafting governors and collecting fees for reissues was a chronic evil throughout the colonial period in New York, and six or seven years were sufficient for a governor to become wealthy by these practices.

The atrocities which developed with the transportation of emigrants would be incredible were it not for the unimpeachable evidence collected in a few works. We have shown the kidnaping of blacks in Africa duplicated by the kidnaping of whites in Europe. The overcrowding of ships in the African slave trade, with its consequent horrors of epidemics of scurvy and small pox, deaths by starvation, smothering and violence, also had their counterpart in the white slave trade of American ship masters with Europe. In fact, some of the details of this traffic are sickening and are scarcely exceeded in cruelty by the deeds of barbarous

[15] Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, pp. 77-78.
[16] Fisher, "Men, Women and Manners in Colonial Times," Vol. II, pp. 104-105.

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peoples who lack the culture of civilization. The death of a black slave on the voyage to America meant a distinct loss to the slaver; but death did not always rob the ship captain of his profits on the white slave trade. The white slavers managed to collect a toll of death by providing that *"surviving relatives of those who died at sea after the vessel had made more than one-half of the journey, were held responsible for the debts of the deceased."*[17]

Not all those who left Europe did so with the intention of serving a period of years in the colonies to pay for their passage. Many of them, after many sacrifices, saved sufficient sums to pay the expense of the voyage. But ship captains, co-operating with Neulanders, contrived methods by which they robbed emigrants of their money and sold them into servitude to pay debts contracted on the voyage. In the journey from their homes to the ships tolls, fees and duties were exacted on their baggage. The baggage itself, often containing money or valuables, was either stolen or sent by another boat leaving the emigrant at the mercy of the ship master. Enormous prices were also charged for meals so that the poor wretches thus swindled were sold on their arrival in America to pay for debts forced upon them. Even those whose funds were not exhausted by these practices had no guarantee that they would not be sold. *"The well-to-do would have to pay for those who could not, or be themselves sold as redemptioners.* This arrangement protected the captain against loss, in case a large number of redemptioners died on the way, and also gave him an excuse for extortions. The Germans of Philadelphia attempted to legislate against these abuses, beginning in 1750, but were for a long time unsuccessful, *because of the presence in high places of influential grafters heavily interested in the profits of immigrant transportation."*[18] It may be said in passing, in that day the payment of fare did not include board, and as the immigrant's provisions were often

[17] Geiser, "Redemptioners," pp. 53-54.

[18] Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, p. 69. See also Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 43.

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with his baggage, the theft of these left him at the mercy of his exploiters.

However, this robbery, bad as it is, is humane compared with the terrible experience of these unfortunates on board the ships. Here the wretchedness growing out of the avarice of the slavers runs the gamut of human suffering. The large profits to be obtained from the traffic led to overcrowding. Almshouses and prisons were emptied to secure human merchandise for American employers. "The crowded exportation of Irish Catholics," Brancroft writes, "was a frequent event, and was attended by aggravations hardly inferior to the usual atrocities of the African slave trade."[19] Starvation and death from thirst were common occurrences. Shipwrecks were also frequent and reports of these were suppressed in Europe. Two thousand died in one year of diseases resulting from overcrowding. One ship sailing in 1730 with 150 emigrants, had only 13 survivors. Another sailed in 1745 with 400 Germans, of whom only 50 lived to see America. *Still another bearing* 1,500 *lost* 1,100 *from deaths on the voyage.* Children seldom survived the journey; "many a time parents are compelled to see their children die of hunger, thirst or sickness, and then see them cast into the water. Few women in confinement escaped with their lives; *many a mother is cast into the water with her child.*"[20]

The space allotted to the emigrants on board ship accounts for the frightful mortality from disease. Emigrant ships sailing from Holland packed their passengers in a space two feet wide and six feet long. The rations served were small and poor; the drinking water was black, thick and full of worms; spoiled biscuits, full of red worms and spider's nests, were served to the starving. Hunger on one boat drove the starving men to break into the food apartment for which all the passengers were punished. The men received no bread and the women only one biscuit. Twenty

[19]Quoted by Washington, "The Story of the Negro," Vol. I, p. 110.
[20]Faust, "The German Element," Vol. I, pp. 70-71. See also Geiser, "Redemptioners" (p. 48), for account of deaths from starvation and disease.

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men, women and children died of hunger. "The hunger was so great on board that all the bones about the ship . . . were pounded with a hammer and eaten; and what is more lamentable, some of the deceased persons, not many hours before their death, crawled on their hands and feet to the captain, and begged him for God's sake, to give them a mouthful of bread or a drop of water to keep them from perishing, but their supplications were in vain; he most obstinately refused, and thus did they perish."[21] Mittleberger, a German traveler, mentions "thirty-two children in our ship, all of whom were thrown in the sea. . . . Children who have not yet had the measles or small pox generally get them on board the ship, and mostly die of them . . . *sometimes whole families die in quick succession; so that often many dead persons lie in the berths beside the living ones, when contagious diseases have broken out.* . . ."[22]

When these slave ships landed at Philadelphia or other ports the scenes were pathetic in the extreme. The immigrants are examined before the ship casts anchor. Those not paying their passage are advertised in the newspapers for sale. Unmarried people of both sexes find ready buyers. Old married people, widows and the feeble, are a drug on the market, unless they have healthy children who assume the debts of the parents, which extends the period of their servitude. But "the sick are frequently detained beyond the period of recovery, when a release would frequently have saved them."[23] When land is sighted the wretches crowd the deck and weep and sing and pray and praise God. But the rejoicings soon cease and give way to cries of despair because "parents must sell and trade away their children like so many cattle."[24] Batches of twenty-five and fifty are purchased by the hated "soul drivers" and retailed to wealthy farmers. This auction of

[21]Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 49, quoting Mittleberger, a German traveler who wrote in 1750.
[22]Geiser, p. 50.
[23]Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, pp. 66-67.
[24]Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 52.

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white flesh is a common occurrence in Philadelphia and excites no more comment than the sale of hogs.

To see loved ones sold with the possibility of never seeing them again was dreadful; but to remain in the clutches of the slavers seemed a worse evil than to be sold. To escape the ship captain and forget the tragedies of the voyage was the consuming desire of the victims. In fact, many felt disappointed if not purchased. William Eddis, an English traveler *who boarded a white slave ship in Philadelphia forty-one years after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence* (1817), describes an incident of this kind. "As we ascended the side of the hulk," he writes, "a most revolting scene of want and misery presented itself. The eye involuntarily turned for some relief from the horrible picture of human suffering which this living sepulchre afforded. Mr. ..... enquired if there were any shoemakers on board. The captain advanced; his appearance bespoke his office, he was an American, tall, determined, and with an eye that flashed with Algerine cruelty. He called in the Dutch language for shoemakers, and never can I forget the scene which followed. *The poor fellows came running up with unspeakable delight,* no doubt anticipating a relief from their loathsome dungeon. Their clothes, if rags deserve that denomination, actually perfumed the air. Some were without shirts, others had this article of dress, but of a quality as coarse as the worst packing cloth. . . . When they saw at our departure that we had not purchased, their countenances fell to that standard of stupid gloom which seemed to place them a link below rational beings."[25]

As though the frightful conditions of the voyage were not sufficient to break the spirit of the victims of the slave trade, corporal punishment was administered for many offenses. Just how widespread this practice was cannot be determined with certainty, but that it prevailed there can be no doubt. John Harrower, a redemptioner, kept a diary from 1773 to 1776. He relates, among other things, the

[25]Quoted by Geiser, p. 57.

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experience of a servant, Daniel Turner, who returned to the ship drunk, and for using abusive language toward two officers he was horsewhipped, "put in irons and thumb-screwed." One hour later he was released from the screws, taken out of the irons and bound and gagged for the remainder of the night.[26]

The diseases contracted on the voyage by those whose destination was Philadelphia alarmed the inhabitants of that city. On the recommendation of Governor Thomas of Pennsylvania in 1742, an act was passed providing for the purchase of a site for a pest-house. Laws had been passed at an earlier period prohibiting the landing of convicts, lunatics and those infected with contagious diseases, but ship captains managed to smuggle these classes ashore during the night. *Ship masters also acquired the habit of confiscating the property of the dead.*

The pest-house law remained a dead letter, for seven years later a petition is presented to the assembly asserting, among other things, "that for want of suitable buildings and other conveniences, the sick had been induced to wander from one place to another, without care, and to the manifest danger of the inhabitants." From this we would judge that the "grafters in high places" were still on good terms with the slavers and shared in the latter's spoils. More acts were passed, but were easily evaded or not enforced. "In the act of 1749, for example, which was primarily intended to prevent the importation of passengers in too great numbers in a single vessel by specifying the space that each passenger should have, no provision was made for the height of each berth. *Vessels were still crowded as much as before the act was passed.* To comply with the two dimensions specified by law, the berths were so constructed as to reduce the former height, thus giving no increase in the number of cubic feet per capita. On the whole the conditions through the middle of the century were bad. The increase of immigration brought with it an

[26] "Documentary History of American Industrial Society," Vol. I, p. 368.

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increase of disorder. *The sick were neglected; contracts made in Europe between importers and passengers were disregarded; immigrants were sold into service to pay the fare of friends or relatives who had died on the journey; husband, wife and children were still separated by being sold to different masters; passengers were robbed of their baggage on landing, and held and treated as prisoners until sold.*"[27]

As stated in a previous chapter the Revolution brought few changes in legislation to improve the lot of imported servants and, in Pennsylvania, "not until a law was passed preventing imprisonment for debt did the merchants and importers lose their grip on this most lucrative traffic."[28] And improved conditions in debtors' prisons did not take place till 1814. A law of Pennsylvania in 1794, passed ostensibly to provide food, clothing and shelter to the poor in the debtors' prison in Philadelphia, *granted only seven cents a day for food for each prisoner.*"[29]

Such was the white slave trade to America from the earliest days of colonization down to a period which closed with the election of the seventh president of the United States. Only the superiority of the negro as an agricultural slave and the gradual cheapening of wage labor finally put an end to indentured servitude and the slave traffic based upon it. One may search the resolutions, platforms, or declarations of the Federalist and anti-Federalist or other parties down to the administration of President Jackson, when the system of indentured service finally disappeared, at least in the North, and he will look in vain for any denunciation of the atrocities reviewed in this chapter and the one preceding it.

Peonage or the debt system of servitude still prevailing in some of the Southern states is one heritage of it. As we shall see later, it was also resorted to in many of the Cen-

[27] Geiser, "Redemptioners," p. 64.
[28] Ibid, p. 70.
[29] McMaster, "The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," p. 51.

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tral States almost to the time of the Civil War by owners of negroes to avoid coming in conflict with the federal prohibition of slavery in that section. In some of the Southern States it existed with scarcely any modifications at all down to the rebellion. In many of the Northern States of the Mississippi Valley the indentured codes were drawn upon as models for selling various offenders for limited terms of servitude when they were unable to pay fines.

When William Henry Harrison was a candidate for President in 1840, his opponents published broadcast his action in 1807 when as Governor of Indiana Territory, he approved the act of that year which provided for the sale of those unable to pay fines or the costs of suits at law. Also when a member of the Ohio legislature in 1821 he voted for an act, one section of which provided that "when any person shall be imprisoned, either upon execution or otherwise, for non-payment of a fine or costs, or both, it shall be lawful for the Sheriff of the county to sell out such person as a servant to any person within this State, who will pay the whole amount due, for the shortest period of service."[80]

In Georgia a code was compiled by Howell Cobb and adopted by the General Assembly in 1859. The section on Indentured Servants was, according to its preamble, to settle the question as to whether contracts signed in European countries would be recognized as binding in Georgia when presented by masters or ship captains having a batch of servants for sale. The act provided that the terms and conditions of such indentures should be recognized and fulfilled under Georgia laws. Should a servant fail to carry out the contract the master could bring him before any three justices of a county who decided the issue and had power to bind the servant. The justices were empowered to decide the ages of the servants brought before them and the terms they were to serve. The act further provided for the care of servants, against *immoderate cor-*

[80] McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. VI, p. 524.

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rection, and cautioned against *whipping them naked* until master and servant had been heard by the justices. Servants could make complaint of ill-treatment before any justice who, "if he finds cause," may bind the master over until the complaint is heard before the Inferior Court. The court was given discretion to "adjudge, order and appoint what shall be necessary and proper, as well with respect to the diet, lodging, clothing and excessive labor, as to the *correction* of the servant or servants, *complaining.*" If the court or the three justices decided that a servant's complaint was unfounded the "moderate punishment" of *thirty-nine lashes* was ordered by the court. Should the servant absent himself from his owner's service, the court was authorized to bind the servant "for such absence, a term, not exceeding *four days for every day's absence,* more than the time he or she were originally indentured for, by an order, entered as aforesaid, on the court books."

It is clear enough that the Negro slave had every real advantage of his white brother in servitude, except in the duration of servitude. And even as to the duration of servitude the law itself, as it must have been administered by the class in power, contained no substantial guarantee for the servant. One section provides what might virtually lead to the quadrupling and indefinite extension of the term of service. Any poor alien, independent of whether he had paid his passage or promised to indent himself, could be very easily, and doubtless often was, enslaved by the ship's master upon arrival, and sold to some planter. The naked word of the friendless and penniless alien could not have gone far against the word of a jolly, sociable ship captain in a court composed of planter squires, themselves always in the market for cheap human flesh, and themselves often the convivial chums and hosts of the jolly captain himself, when he chanced into a Georgia port. The whole act, looked at from the servant's point of view, is full of what we moderns call "jokers."

The servant who haled his master into court for redress of any grievance, was certain to have wound up

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petition, that Congress declare that the Article meant that when slaves are imported into the territory they became free, "but were still bound to serve their owners for life!"[40]

When Indiana became a territory the legislature in 1805 passed a measure for introducing slavery by indenture by permitting slaves over fifteen years of age to be imported and to sign contracts for service to masters within thirty days. Provisions were also made for holding the children of slaves by indentures, and by this system slaves were held for many years after Indiana became a state.[41] In 1806 the legislature enacted that the time of service of indented slaves could be levied upon and sold as personal property. Police regulations were also enacted that resembled the slave codes of Virginia and other Southern states.[42] The struggle between those who opposed and those who favored indenturing negroes was a constant issue in the politics of Indiana, and by 1830 there were four more slaves in the one town of Vincennes than in all Indiana in 1800! During all this time there was no effort in Congress to nullify the indenture laws or to enforce Article VI.[43]

Illinois repeated the same experience and had the same struggles. Most of the settlers "purchased slaves when very young in order to secure the longest legal terms of service. Not satisfied with that, they registered them for periods of servitude far in excess of the legal limit, many being booked to serve from forty to sixty, and even ninety-nine years."[44] Long after the adoption of the Illinois consitution in 1818 blacks were held in servitude and bills of sale are still preserved dated as late as 1848.[45]

It is needless to say that the courts handed down many

[40]Dunn, "Indiana, A Redemption from Slavery," pp. 285-286.
[41]Ibid, p. 329-330.
[42]Ibid, p. 349.
[43]Ibid, Chap. XII.
[44]Harris, "Negro Servitude in Illinois," p. 11.
[45]Ibid, p. 52. See also Parrish, "Historic Illinois," Chap. XXII, and Turner, "Rise of the New West," p. 150. Slave owners in Texas, while that state was under Mexican rule, followed the same method in evading a law of Mexico forbidding slavery. Negroes were often bound to serve 99 years.—"Documentary History of American Industrial Society," Vol. II, p. 251.

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"learned" opinions upholding the violation of Article VI. In this way indentured servitude served as an agreeable substitute for chattel slavery. The collar that held the white thrall for several centuries in America was transferred to the necks of the blacks in the Mississippi Valley, and was worn by them down to the middle of the last century in violation of the plainest provision of a Federal organic law. There is nothing strange about it, as the system served the interests of the classes who profited by it, and they took care, as a ruling class always has, to see that all the governing machinery was in their hands and that laws were enforced, ignored or interpreted according to their will.

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Chapter V

Class Struggles

It need occasion no surprise if the economic, social and political status of the working people in our early history provoked revolts of both individuals and masses of the poor. Their lot on the whole was bad, and though rebellion generally brought savage retaliation, this knowledge did not deter them from hazarding an occasional blow at their exploiters. Deprived of education and lacking knowledge of the powers they had to contend with, these revolts were generally ineffective in securing any changes for the better until the dawn of the nineteenth century. The rebellions included all classes of workers, such as the indentured servants, the redemptioners, the black slaves, the so-called "free laborers," poor farmers and, in some cases, small shop keepers and petty tradesmen who felt the heavy burden of taxation imposed by grafting colonial governors and their fellow pilferers. Where masses of these rebelled they always lacked any definite plan of action. They were blind uprisings striking against economic, political and social rulers and the latter, possessing the coercive powers of government, were able to suppress them.

The intolerable conditions of the blacks provoked at least twenty-five rebellions of these slaves in the United States before the American Revolution. The fear of these slave insurrections gave rise to the atrocious slave codes of the Southern states. Rebellions on the slave ships were put down by applying the thumb-screws, chaining slaves together, or shooting down the leaders and casting the dead into the sea. To reduce the danger of revolts slaves were generally prohibited from meeting together without a white man being present, or to leave the plantation without a permit. A free man could lash disobedient slaves and could kill them if they struck in self-defense. To take the life of a slave was no crime. Some offenses were punished

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by cropping the ears or branding the cheek; cutting off the right hand, severing the head from the trunk, dismembering the body and hanging the pieces up to public view.[1] One rebellious slave in the Bermudas had his right hand chopped off at the wrist and the bleeding stump thrust into boiling pitch. After suffering excruciating agony he was immersed and burned to death.

During Governor Hunter's administration of New York in 1712, a party of negroes, armed with guns, knives and hatchets, fired a building and shot and slashed those who ran to the spot. Soldiers captured the slaves and twenty-one were executed. "One was broken on the wheel, and several were burned alive at the stake, while the rest were hanged."[2] In 1774 a revolt in Georgia was suppressed and two leaders burned at the stake after having murdered four and injured as many more. About one thousand blacks revolted in Virginia in 1800 and marched on the city of Richmond. A swollen stream interfered with their march; the leaders were captured and executed. The rebellion, under the leadership of Nat Turner, in the same state in 1831, terrorized the haughty planters. Local militia co-operating with United States troops crushed the uprising after the blacks had killed sixty white people. Twelve of them were sold out of the state and twenty, including Turner, were hanged.

In Virginia the convicts transported to that colony were chiefly political offenders; the number of common criminals was never large. Among these were those who were driven to petty crimes of poverty. In 1663 an insurrection was plotted by white slaves who felt their sufferings keenly and the insolence of the towering planters was not calculated to reconcile them to their hard lot. However, they formed no definite plans for their revolt which was easily suppressed.[3]

An act of the Assembly in 1640 held every master of a family responsible for each of its members' military service,

[1]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. II, p. 19.
[2]Fiske, "Dutch and Quaker Colonies," Vol. II, p. 288.
[3]Bancroft, "History of the United States," Vol. II, pp. 192-193.

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the family including servants but not blacks. Each white slave looked forward to the time when he would be free and had not the same temptation to rebel as the blacks. The latter were naturally immune from military service as they might turn their experience to use for their own account.

As servants increased in number the fear of white rebellions increased so that by 1672 only such indentured whites were admitted to military duty whose terms had nearly expired, the masters reasoning that whites whose terms would soon expire would not hazard their future by giving support to any revolt. When Governor Nicholson proposed in 1699 that all agricultural servants should be taught to bear arms the House of Burgesses replied that it would be a hardship to the planters to have their servants subject to the call of militia officers, especially at times when they were sorely needed in the tobacco fields and that the policy was a dangerous one. "The Burgesses closed with the statement that it was difficult to control their white laborers when unarmed; and that, if they were armed and permitted to attend musters, they might be tempted to seek to obtain their freedom by slaying their masters."[4]

Throughout the colonial period this fear of an uprising of the servile whites was a source of uneasiness to the ruling class. Fear of foreign invasion always aroused apprehension that the enslaved whites would rise and strike a blow for their own freedom during an invasion.

The servants at this period numbered as many as the freemen while many of the poorer classes of freemen "were heavily burdened with debt contracted in the effort to earn a livelihood by cultivating tobacco on a poor soil."[5] Should these two elements join in a rebellion at such a moment the consequences for the aristocracy would not be pleasant to contemplate.

[4]Bruce, "Institutional History of Virginia," Vol. II, p. 7.

[5]Ibid, Vol. II, p. 200. The novel of Mary Johnson, "Prisoners of Hope," is a tale of colonial Virginia and deserves to rank high as a faithful picture of the life of the white servants and the aristocratic society built upon their labor. The terror of the ruling families over an impending revolt of the convicts, Oliverians, indented servants, and redemptioners is also drawn with power. The novel is a better history of the life and institutions of the time than many histories that include Virginia.

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In this colony a rebellion of poor whites took place in 1676 that startled the planter aristocracy. Roughly speaking there were four classes in the colony; the great planters below tidewater on the main rivers, who lived in luxury and possessed the governing power; the middle class of small planters and farmers who aped the manners of the ruling class; the poor whites and indentured slaves, and the blacks. The frontier was peopled by the poorer classes of farmers and frequent Indian raids had destroyed crops and many families were massacred. The terrible massacres in which the outlying settlements suffered most in 1622 and 1644 were still remembered with terror by the settlers. Appeals for protection repeatedly made to Governor Berkeley, one of the many colonial grafters of that time, met with little encouragement. Berkeley was interested in the fur trade with the Indians, who were making war on the settlers, and to recruit sufficient militia to protect the latter would have endangered Berkeley's profits in the traffic. This was one powerful grievance that led to what has come to be known as "Bacon's Rebellion."

But there were other long-standing grievances. One was the Long Assembly, which remained in session fourteen years without a single dissolution, and became callous, corrupt and insolent in the exercise of its power. One writer asserts that "The series of wrongful acts leading up to the rebellion of 1676 were among the most exasperating that any section of the American people have ever been called upon to endure for the same length of time. Restrictive navigation laws; measures for affording Burgesses very high remuneration without relieving the counties of additional expense on that score; the continuation of the same Assembly for fourteen years because Berkeley had found its members to be submissive and ready instruments for his purposes; the concentration of all the offices and all the power in the hands of a few possessing no legal claim to such privileges; the persecution of religious sects; the subordination of the whole community, threatened with Indian invasion, to the interests of the Governor in the fur trade,

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a trade which would have been destroyed by a vigorous campaign against the savages,"[6] all these grievances had been accumulating for years.

The Assembly that met in 1662 was a self-perpetuating one, being prorogued from session to session, until it sat for fourteen years. The counties were burdened with enormous taxation to pay the excessive salaries which the members of the Assembly voted to themselves. This oppression spread through the whole framework of Virginia society and won for the haughty aristocracy the deep hatred of nearly all classes below it. The revolt which followed the Indian raids would have culminated without them in time.[7] In 1670 increased property qualifications for the franchise increased the discontent among the poorer classes. All these factors contributed to what has come to be known as "Bacon's Rebellion."

Nathaniel Bacon was a young man of 28 and a descendant of the great Lord Bacon. He was a land owner, a member of the council, a pursuasive speaker and sympathetic with the struggles of the poor. His land was in the zone of the warring Indians and he asked for a commission against them. Governor Berkeley refused the commission, for to grant it would have been a confession of weakness and error of judgment that would have increased the contempt in which he was held. Receiving the Governor's evasive answer, Bacon took the field at the head of the distressed settlers. Having defeated the Indians he was arrested on his return to Jamestown, but after giving promise of good behaviour, was released.

In the elections to the House of Burgesses which shortly followed, many ignored the property qualifications and voted. Bacon was unanimously elected a burgess from his county, and the Assembly elected Thomas Godwin as Speaker, who was regarded by the aristocracy as a friend of the "rebellion and treason which distracted Virginia." Bacon was appointed commander-in-chief of the forces and

[6]Bruce, "Institutional History of Virginia," Vol. II, p. 264.
[7]Ibid, p. 493.

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the town was boisterous with joy over the event. Under his leadership the house restored the old basis for the suffrage, some trade monopolies were overthrown, two magistrates were disfranchised for misconduct in office, false returns of sheriffs were guarded against, the powers of the church aristocracy were limited, and some of the governor's fees curtailed. These measures bore the stamp of Bacon's popular principles and were enacted over the opposition of the aristocratic members of the house, and Bacon was cordially hated by Berkeley and the aristocracy.

In the meantime his enemies plotted for his overthrow, and fearing that his life was in danger, the rebel left Jamestown. "It vexes me to the heart," said Bacon, "that while I am hunting the wolves and tigers that destroy our lambs, I should myself be pursued as a savage." He asks, have not the ruling classes "devoured the common treasury? What arts, what sciences, what schools of learning have they promoted?"[8]

Encouraged by popular approval Bacon proceeded against the Indians, while Berkeley withdrew beyond the Chesapeake, and by promises of plunder endeavored to collect an army, "men of a base and cowardly disposition, allured by the passion for plunder."[9] He returned to Jamestown in a few days.

He then charged the governor with having imposed unjust taxes "for the advancement of private favorites and other sinister ends," for "having rendered contemptible the majesty of justice, of advancing . . . scandalous and ignorant favorites," for having assumed "the monopoly of the beaver trade," and failure to "give protection against the assaults of the Indians." He also denounced the aristocracy, the "juggling parasites whose tottering fortunes have been repaired at the public charge." These charges committed Bacon to open revolt against the governor and the ruling class.

He again entered the field against the Indians and on

[8] Bancroft, "History of the United States," Vol. II, p. 223.
[9] Ibid, p. 226.

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the return march the rebels burned Jamestown. But his radical utterances and general policy frightened some of his well-to-do followers, who deserted him—a treachery for which the middle class is noted in all countries and at all times. The poorer classes were left to form the ranks of his small force and the struggle assumed the character of a class war with all the elements of the aristocracy arrayed against the rebels. Shortly after the burning of Jamestown, while marching north, Bacon fell a victim of malarial fever. His death brought the collapse of the rebellion, though small groups held out for some time. Berkeley punished the rebels with such ferocity as to call forth the protest of the king, who said, *"the old fool has put to death more people in that naked country than I did here for the murder of my father."*[10]

Berkeley justified the executions by his right to proclaim martial law, although when he exercised it resistance had ceased and the "real reason for which the power had been originally granted was no longer in operation."[11] Fearing that juries would acquit the rebels courts-martial hurried them to death. Women and children were driven from home and compelled to rely on charity. Of those who went to trial none escaped death. The Assembly was finally forced to interfere and voted an address "that the governor would spill no more blood.[12] In fact, the foremost historian of Virginia asserts that "it is doubtful if any of them (the rebels) were tried at all by the only civil court having the power to inflict punishment for their supposed treason. The unfortunate Drummond, for instance, seems to have been ordered to execution only a few hours after his arrest; and there were other cases quite as summary which reflect an equal degree of shame and disgrace on Berkeley's memory."[13]

It was the leading families who had large estates and

[10] Fiske, "Old Virginia and Her Neighbors," Vol. II, p. 95. See also Thwaites, "The Colonies," pp. 78-79.
[11] Bruce, "Institutional History of Virginia," Vol. II, p. 321.
[12] Bancroft, "History of the United States," Vol. II, p. 232.
[13] Bruce, "Institutional History of Virginia," Vol. I, pp. 674-675.

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made up the wealthy aristocracy of Virginia that supported the grafting governor in the rebellion. This class had gradually usurped powers in the government and restricted the privileges of the poorer classes. A great section of the population was also in the direst poverty so that the economic and political conditions favoring revolt were abundant. William Sherwood, who later became attorney general of Virginia, referred to the rebels as "ye scum of the country." A member of the council says that Bacon "gathers about him *a Rabble of the basest sort of people, whose Condicion was such, as by a change could not admit of worse,* . . . who for ye ease of the poore will have noe taxes paied, . . . but would have all magistracie & Governm'nt taken away & Sett up one themselves, & to make their Good Intentions more manifest *stick not to talk openly of sharing men's estates among themselves.*"

This testimony comes from the aristocrats, and indicates that they regarded the rebellion as a revolt of the poorer classes to secure equality of political rights and economic opportunities. The rebels are even charged with having communistic aspirations—with the desire "of sharing men's estates" in common. It is probable that Bacon may have had a communistic program in mind. It would have served to unite the poor against the landed aristocracy. They also knew that early in the history of Virginia the planting of corn, clearing the wilderness, fortifying the settlement and work in general was performed, for a time, on a communistic basis. The charge against Bacon then was that he promised a return to this early stage in the history of the colony.

Bacon was driven to this radicalism in order to hold the loyalty of the poor after the desertion of the better-situated elements and also because of the knowledge that should he fail he would probably be hanged or shot.

Many refugees of Bacon's Rebellion fled to North Carolina, where they found a safe asylum from the blood lust of Berkeley. Here the population was also seething with revolt because of the Navigation Act, restriction of

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political privileges, and tyrannical administration of the colony. The leader of the rebellion was John Culpepper, held by the royalists as meriting "hanging, for endeavoring to set the poor people to plundering the rich." One counsellor joined the rebellion, while the rest, with President Miller, were imprisoned.

Culpepper had the support of the poor and uneducated majority, and accepted a commission to England to present the grievances of the colonists. Miller escaped to England and enlisted the support of the mercantile cities, and Culpepper was arrested for high treason just as he was embarking from America. A trial resulted in his acquittal by an English jury. Governor Sothel, who succeeded to that position after the restoration of peace, was another of the many colonial grafters of that time. "From among many as infamous as himself, historians have selected him as the most infamous." He swindled the proprietaries and exploited the settlers through excessive fees for five years when he was deposed by his outraged victims.[14]

In Maryland similar acts of tyranny were developing popular discord and the news of Bacon's Rebellion encouraged the populace in trying to abolish abuses. During the absence of Lord Baltimore the Assembly responded to popular demands by extending the franchise, but Lord Baltimore on his return annulled the popular measure. Dire poverty was the lot of many and not only rebellion, but independence, was planned. The unrest was aggravated by the dominant religious creed of the Catholics. Though rebellion or mutinous speeches were punishable by whipping, boring the tongue, imprisonment, or death, the discontent increased, and in 1689 the insurgents usurped the government.

The next revolt of importance was that of Leisler's Rebellion in New York twelve years after Bacon's Rebellion in Virginia. As already noted New York was the nearest approach to the establishment of feudalism in America. The sweeping powers and privileges given the manor lords cre-

[14]Bancroft, "History of the United States," Vol. II, Chap. XIII.

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ated discontent from the beginning of colonization. Their descendants claimed feuded rights well into the nineteenth century and on the great Van Rensselaer estate an attempt to collect long arrears of rents developed an anti-rent movement (1839-1846) which resulted in bloody riots.[15]

Coupled with the existence of an overbearing, wealthy, ruling class, was the usual administration of grafting governors. Fletcher, we have seen, had a close alliance with the pirates and shared in their loot. The pirates were underselling the regular merchants, which added this class to the mass of the discontented. This pirate commerce was enormous and for a time New York resembled an oriental city. "For a dozen years or more the streets of New York might have reminded one of Teheran or Bassora, with their shops displaying rugs of Anatolia or Daghestan, tables of carved teak-wood, vases of hammered brass or silver, Bagdad portieres, fans of ivory or sandalwood, soft shawls of myriad gorgeous hues and white crape."[16]

The landed aristocracy shared some of their power with rich fur traders, lawyers and officials. At the bottom of society were the small farmers, sailors, shipwrights, artisans and indentured slaves who were viewed with contempt by the aristocracy.

Jacob Leisler, who gave his name to the rebellion, was a German of humble origin, born at Frankfort-on-the-Main. He had married a daughter of a rich family, but was not accepted on terms of equality with the ruling class. He was lacking in the education and polish that distinguished the wealthy idlers. His sympathy with the poor was expressed in deeds. In 1689 he bought a piece of land for Huguenots, and at another time when a poor Huguenot family were to be sold as redemptioners, he delivered them from servitude by paying their passage money.[17] He was admired by the poor for his honesty and unselfishness, which made him the logical leader of the discontent that had been long gathering in the city.

[15] Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 199.
[16] Fiske, "Dutch and Quaker Colonies," Vol. II, p. 225.
[17] Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, p. 14.

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King James II had consolidated New England, New York and New Jersey under Governor Andros. The latter went to New England, leaving Francis Nicholson as lieutenant governor, when news came of the flight of King James and the landing of William of Orange in England. Nicholson withheld the news and Leisler, hearing of the event, made it public. The latter also refused to pay duty on a cargo of wine on the ground that the collector was a Catholic, and since King James' flight no legal government existed in New York. There was also the popular belief that Governor Nicholson had gone over to Louis XIV, and an invasion by a French fleet was feared.

An insolent remark of the governor released the pent-up forces of revolt. A militia company, representing the popular party, seized the fort and Leisler, after repeated solicitations, took command. A committee of public safety, elected by popular vote, turned the aristocratic government out and proclaimed Jacob Leisler commander-in-chief of the fort and city. At another election the aristocracy was completely routed and Leisler was proclaimed supreme commander of the province. The defeated masters endeavored to stir up discord. "The name of Leisler was dragged through the mire. He was branded as a tyrant, usurper, demagogue, even as a Papist and Jacobite, by the very persons who had proved their disloyalty to the new dynasty."[18]

The aristocrats tried to kidnap the popular commander, but failed and three of them were themselves imprisoned. Leisler held power for several years during which the first American congress of the colonies met in New York at his call in May, 1690. But his rule was not to endure long. Discontent over taxes, the refusal of William to recognize his agent, the timidity and lack of concerted plans of his followers, the plotting and bitter antagonism of his enemies, contributed to his overthrow. The arrival of Governor Sloughter was followed by the seizure of Leisler and his son-in-law, Milborne. *"A sham trial was instituted, in which*

[18]Ibid, pp. 17-18.

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Sloughter appointed Leisler's personal enemies as his judges."[19] The councilors arrested with him were released; Leisler was charged with rebellion, confiscation of property, and the illegal levying of taxes. He and Milborne refused to defend themselves against the charges and both were sentenced to death. Both were hanged May 16, 1691, near the present site of the World building in Park Row.

A later governor, Lord Bellomont, a man of democratic tastes, who detested the landed parasites, *declared the execution of Leisler and Milborne was a judicial murder* and their estates were restored to their heirs. Though the leaders of the rebellion were removed the Leisler party was active for some years and was instrumental in securing the removal of the notorious Fletcher, whose career we have had occasion to mention a number of times.[20]

Maladministration in North Carolina in the latter part of the eighteenth century provoked the revolt known as the War of the Regulators. Power had been concentrated in the hands of the Governor and a few prominent men. Grafting "rings" controlled the spoils of office in the western counties and excessive taxes plundered the farmers of the back country. Scarcity of money made it difficult for them to pay their taxes, and the collectors frequently refused to extend time for payment and seized property for less than its value. "The Regulators charged that officers played into each other's hands for this purpose, and there were men in Hillsborough who made large sums by dealing in such business."[21]

The sheriffs were dishonest and were charged with having "embezzled more than one-half of the public money

[19]Ibid, p. 23.

[20]Fiske, "Dutch and Quaker Colonies," Vol. II, pp. 183-228, and Appendix I. Also Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, pp. 13-25. Edwin Lassetter Bynner's novel, "The Begum's Daughter," is a story of Leisler's Rebellion, but presents Leisler as a tyrannical fool. The basis of the revolt, the tyranny of the land kings, the shameless grafting of public officials, the oppression of the poor classes and small shopkeepers, is almost entirely concealed and Van Cortlandt, a scion of one of the wealthy families, is made the hero of the story. Fisher in his "Men, Women and Manners in Colonial Times" (pp. 80-84), also gives an unfavorable account of the rebellion.

[21]Howard, "Preliminaries of the Revolution," p. 223, quoting Bassett.

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ordered to be raised and collected by them." In 1770 the official grafters were in arrears more than 66,000 pounds.

A service for which the law provided a fixed fee was also divided into two or more services and a fee demanded for each. The courts were believed to be implicated by their delay of cases, thus increasing costs. The lack of courts in the back country, necessitating a journey of from thirty to sixty miles, was another grievance, and the postponed cases of one court were about one thousand in 1766. Many of these victimized workers, after the revolt was suppressed at the battle of Alamance, in 1771, moved on into the wilderness while many of their exploiters became prominent as leaders in the war of independence. The survivors of the revolt who stayed in North Carolina either remained aloof from the war or openly supported the British as against the ruling classes.[22]

The records regarding revolts of indentured whites are scanty, but that they took place is certain. The white bondman, like the black slave, frequently acting under the spur of brutal treatment, would murder his master. One redemptioner who was hung in chains in Virginia, in August, 1678, for murdering his owner, mistress and her maid, has left a pathetic autobiography telling of the treatment he received and how he came to the resolution to kill his tormentors.[23]

Bernard Romans' "Concise Natural History of East and West Florida" (New York, 1776), records a rebellion of white slaves about 35 miles south of St. Augustine, on St. John's river. The writer asserts that the settlement was famous "on account of the cruel methods of settling it, which made it the daily topic of conversation for a long time in this and the neighboring provinces."[24]

[22]Ibid, Chap. XIII, Paul Leicester Ford's novel, "Janice Meredith," not only portrays white servitude during the revolutionary period, but also the fluctuating character of sentiment at that time, favoring the rebels one day and opposing the next. This is humorously portrayed in the publican who changed the sign on his tavern from George III to George Washington and back again as the fortunes of war dictated.

[23]See "A Documentary History of American Industrial Society," Vol. I.

[24]Ibid, pp. 348-352.

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Shays' Rebellion after the Revolution had such an important influence in determining the acts of the Constitutional Convention that we will consider it in another chapter. Social upheavals and class wars have played their part in shaping American history from its beginning. We have seen that all of them had their justification in some economic grievance, and often a long series of unbearable injustices.

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Chapter VI

General Status of the Workers

In reviewing the general economic and social conditions of the workers we are aware that it would be a false judgment to base our estimate on twentieth century standards. The degree of material comfort possible before the age of machinery was necessarily less than now. The capacity for producing wealth was small owing to the crude forms of production that prevailed. Yet with this reservation only one with a bias favoring aristocracy can give the appreciative view of the past that is usually found in the school books and histories. It is no exaggeration to say that the society of colonial times, and long after the Revolution, regarded labor as a badge of shame. It was because of this view held by the wealthy classes that all the colonies, and later the states, withheld the franchise from those not possessing a certain amount of property. The possession of property was a passport to the "best society" and enabled the holder to share in political and other privileges. If a poor farmer or laborer by some stroke of good fortune came into possession of wealth, it removed the social and economic curse under which he previously lived.

Massachusetts, in 1691, restricted the franchise to possessors of an estate of freehold in land or other estate to the value of 40 pounds per annum. A Maryland law (1681) limited the suffrage to those having freeholds of fifty acres or other property worth 40 pounds. In New Jersey (1688) it was 200 acres of land or 50 pounds. New York (1665) provided for town meetings and election of a constable and eight overseers by a "plurality of the voices of the freeholders." In 1680 an assembly was formed composed of eighteen deputies elected by freeholders. In Connecticut (1639) the governor and six magistrates were to be elected by a majority of the freemen. In Virginia the suffrage had been restricted to freemen, but in 1670 it

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was further restricted to "such as by their estates, real or personall, have interest enough to tye them to the endeavor of the publique good."[1] This law was one of the causes contributing to Bacon's Rebellion.

In South Carolina (1765) members of the assembly must own 500 acres of land and ten slaves or possess 1,000 pounds in land, houses and other property. In Georgia delegates to the assembly are required to own 500 acres of land and suffrage was restricted to those who owned 50 acres or a town lot. In North Carolina one must own land to hold office, and only freeholders could vote. "This system was ingrafted on the constitution adopted when North Carolina became a state, and by which senators were obliged to own 300 acres of land, and representatives 100, while the suffrage was restricted to freeholders of 50 acres."[2]

The Declaration of Independence and the triumph of the Revolution brought few changes in the property qualifications for the franchise. Nearly all the state constitutions adopted at this time repeated the assertion of the Declaration that "all men are created equal," but "an examination of these state constitutions reveals the fact that in their formation very little regard was paid to the self-evident truths, and that *the very men who were loudly asserting the political equality of man went on and set up governments under which political equality had no existence.*"[3] The suffrage laws in the states after the Revolution confirm this judgment. Massachusetts required the voter to have an income of three pounds a year from a freehold estate or personal estate worth sixty pounds. In Connecticut he must have a similar income of seven dollars or real estate worth $134. In New Jersey his real estate must be worth fifty pounds, and Maryland the same, or personal property of thirty pounds. In Virginia he must own "twenty-five acres of land, properly planted, with a house thereon at least twelve feet square on the foundation," or fifty acres of wild

[1] See Thwaites, "The Colonies."
[2] Lodge, "History of the English Colonies," p. 149.
[3] McMaster "The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," p. 15.

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land or a town lot. In South Carolina he must be a free white man owning fifty acres or a town lot.

To hold office the property qualifications were still higher, ranging from 100 pounds to 500, or land or slaves, and generally including a belief in the Christian religion. Everywhere the basis of office holding and the suffrage was property. "It was indeed true that all governments derived their just powers from the consent of the governed; yet under these early state constitutions, none but tax-paying, property-owning men could give that consent from which government derives its just powers . . . *The poor man counted for nothing.* He was governed, but not with his consent, by his property-owning Christian neighbors. . . . In short, the broad doctrine that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed, was not accepted by the 'Fathers.' "[4]

Exclusion of masses of workingmen from the ballot down to 1842 provoked what is known in Rhode Island as "Dorr's Rebellion." This revolt temporarily seated Thomas Dorr in the governors chair, but he was finally ousted, the rebellion put down with troops, and a price was placed on the head of the fugitive governor. *He was captured and sentenced to prison for life for the "crime of endeavoring to establish popular rule.* In 1845, a "liberation" governor was elected, Dorr was set free, and the clerk of the supreme court was ordered to write across the record of his sentence the words "REVERSED AND ANNULLED BY ORDER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY."[5]

A study of the official declarations of the dominant political parties down to this time *reveals the fact that all of them were silent regarding this policy of disfranchisement.* In fact, their spokesmen opposed extension of suffrage to the poor. Daniel Webster, for example, in the Massachusetts Constitutional convention (1820) made the

[4]Ibid, pp. 18-21. See also Porter, "A History of Suffrage in the United States," Chap. II.
[5]McMaster, op. cit., pp. 111-112.

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most powerful argument against universal suffrage.[6] In the New York convention (1821) Chancellor Kent, opposing universal suffrage, said: "This democratic principle cannot be contemplated without terror. . . . Universal suffrage jeopardizes property and puts in into the power of the poor and the profligate to control the affluent. . . . *The poor man's interest is always in opposition to his duty,* and it is too much to expect of human nature that interest will not be consulted."[7] This expresses the philosophy of class rule nicely. It is the 'poor man's duty" to serve the ruling class, but his *"interest is always in opposition to his duty."*

We have seen that the wages paid in 1774, about two dollars per week, scarcely enabled the workers to keep out of jail. Their food and clothing were naturally abominable and many modern conveniences were, of course, unknown. The worker "rarely tasted fresh meat as often as once in a week, and paid for it a much higher price than his posterity. . . . A pair of yellow buckskin or leather breeches, a checked shirt, a red flannel jacket, a rusty felt hat cocked up at the corners, shoes of neat's-skin set off with huge buckles of brass, and a leather apron, comprised his scanty wardrobe. The leather he smeared with grease to keep it soft and flexible."[8] The sons generally began life where the fathers ended it.

The Puritan society of New England was based on an aristocracy that found expression in every phase of social life; in manners, habits, customs, morals, religion and dress. Connecticut in 1676 enacted a statute providing that "what persons soever shall wear gold or silver lace, or gold or silver buttons, silk ribbons or other superfluous trimmings" shall be assessed at 150 pound estate, but one clause of the act exempted magistrates, their wives and children and mil-

[6]Ibid. p. 82.
[7]Ibid, pp. 70-71. See Fox, "The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York," Chap. VIII, for an excellent review of the economic arguments against extension of the suffrage made in this convention.
[8]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, pp. 96-97.

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itary commissioned officers, or "such whose quality and estate have been above the ordinary degree though now decayed."[9] This act was intended to mark the distinction between families of wealth and the poor classes by the clothing they wore. Servants and other workmen wore jackets and breeches of serge, linen shirts, worsted stockings and beaver hats. Their diet consisted of salt pork, baked beans, Indian pudding, parched corn, "barley fire-cake" and other rough food.

In the churches "Balustrades, with small columns of varied pattern, kept the nobility of the owner from the too close approach of the vulgar." Those who ruled in the church were always careful to seat the congregation according to class or social rank, and should some blundering official bring common clay too close to superior blood a controversy was sure to result. Equality could not be tolerated in God's meeting house, and "whoever construes early New England thus will comprehend little of its essence." Even in laying out towns the division of the inhabitants into ranks and classes was common, and fines were sometimes graded for offenses according to the rank of the offenders.[10]

Indentured servants worked under rigorous laws and discipline for bad conduct was very severe. Their unexpired terms of service were listed in inventories and were subject to barter and sale, while "Debtors were half civil trespassers and half slaves. They were sold for servants for terms of years. . . . One of the most painful signs of the times is visible in the Massachusetts statute of 1683 to prevent any from selling themselves into servitude for one debt in order to avoid other debts. We can hardly conceive or imagine the grinding pressure these poor delinquents must have endured."[11]

[9] Weeden, "Social and Economic History of New England," Vol. I, pp. 288-289. In 1653 two women were charged with wearing silk hoods and scarfs, but on proving that their husbands were worth 200 pounds each, they were released. Another was also discharged, "upon testimony of her being brought up above the ordinary ranke."—p. 227.

[10] Ibid, Vol. I, pp. 279-281, passim.

[11] Ibid, Vol. I, pp. 274-275. See also Fisher, "Men, Women and Manners in Colonial Times," Vol. I, pp. 208-209.

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The planting, rotting, breaking, dressing, spinning, weaving, and bleaching of flax was an important part of the labor of most families. The spinning wheel was an important equipment of each household and young girls made many garments in anticipation of the day they would become brides. Spinning was the women's occupation, the whir of the wheel being usually accompanied with the songs of the operatives.

Each plantation in the Southern colonies was largely a small community of itself, employing mechanics, carpenters, coopers and laborers. Each was a little social and industrial world consisting of from one to five hundred people. Washington's plantation at Mt. Vernon, Virginia, was a type. He had a blacksmith shop, wood burners to supply charcoal, brickmakers, carpenters, masons, a flour mill, coopers and a schooner to carry produce to market. He also employed shoemakers and conducted a weaving establishment.[12] Chastellux, a French traveler. frequently comments on the masses of the poor and poverty-stricken people he saw in Virginia, some clothed in rags and living in wretched huts. They were indolent and without hope, a result of the degradation that slave labor gave to all forms of useful effort, and from them came many of the "poor whites" of the South today.[13]

Maryland maintained the class distinctions that were observed everywhere. Annapolis was the center of the colony where the planters gathered and reveled in lavish hospitality. Part of the river front was reserved for the residences and gardens of the wealthy class, and here the class distinctions found expression in the streets. "When the gentlemen were masquerading in their quarter, the common people were not even permitted to be in the streets of it."[14]

Throughout colonial society the barbarous criminal codes were borrowed from the countries of Europe and bore

[12]Ibid, pp. 83-84. See also "Documentary History of American Industrial Society," Vol. II, p. 321.
[13]Ibid, pp. 101-102.
[14]Ibid, Vol. II, p. 206.

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heavily on the unfortunates convicted of petty as well as serious crimes. The list of crimes punishable by death was in Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island, 10; in New York, 16; Virginia and later Kentucky 27; in Pennsylvania, 20 on first conviction, and on a second conviction all except larceny were capital crimes.

The colonies generally revised their constitutions after 1776, yet New Hampshire branded burglars with a B on the right hand for the first offense, on the left for the second offense and on the forehead if committed on Sunday.

Massachusetts branded an F on the forehead of the forger of a bank-bill; a B on both cheeks for the second offense of burglary; a T on both cheeks for the second conviction of larceny, and M on the forehead for manslaughter. The perjurer could be fined, pilloried or whipped; the thief branded for a second offense and sentenced to hard labor for life in chains; the forger was whipped, his ears cropped, and he imprisoned; the counterfeiter had one ear cut off, was given forty lashes on the march to the gallows, and made to stand one hour with the rope over it.

In Connecticut the perjurer stood for an hour with his ears nailed to the pillory when unable to pay a fine. He who married a sister-in-law was punished with the wife with forty lashes on the bare back and forced to wear a letter I sewed on the outside of arm or back. Delaware followed the English law and employed the branding irons, too. M stood for manslaughter and T for felony. In North Carolina the perjurer, after having his ears nailed to the pillory, was released at the expiration of an hour by having them cut from his head. All counties in Maryland were required to have branding irons: S for seditious libeler; F for forger; T on the left hand for thief; R on the shoulder for a vagabond or rogue. The mutilations, brandings and whipping continued for a half century after the Declaration of Independence.[15]

For minor offenses that did not merit the death penalty

[15]McMaster, in American Historical Review, Vol. II, article entitled "Old Standards of Public Morals."

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branding, whipping, cropping the ears, standing on the pillory, sitting in the stocks, or ducking were the common punishments. Paupers who received aid of the public authorities, their wives and children, must wear on their sleeve the letter P. These practices continued well into the nineteenth century.[16]

In New England the Puritan aristocracy enacted laws to secure the labor power of children. As early as 1641 Plymouth ordered that those receiving relief from the towns and having children the township shall put the latter to work. Boston in 1672 ordered certain persons to place their children out as indentured servants. *If parents refuse the town officials are ordered to place the children "with such masters as they shall provide."* In 1682 a workhouse was ordered built to employ children who "shamefully spend their time in the streets." In Connecticut children at play are often bound out to serve masters; boys to the age of 21, and girls to the age of 18, or till they marry. A law of the general court of Massachusetts, in 1643, makes it lawful for the constable to whip runaway bound boys. The "uplift movement" continues during the next century, for Boston in 1720 appointed a committee who recommended that twenty spinning wheels be provided "for such children as should be sent from the almhouse." Fifty years later Mr. William Molineux of Boston asks the legislature to assist him in his plan for *"manufacturing the children's labour into wearing apparel" and "employing young females from eight years old and upward."* Before the close of the century manufacturing was developed and a French traveler protests that "men congratulate themselves upon making early martyrs of these innocent creatures, for is it not a torment to these poor little beings . . . to be a whole day and almost every day of their lives employed at the same work, in an obscure and infected prison."[17] The sweating of women and children became a marked feature of New England 'democracy" after the Revolution.

[16]McMaster, "The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," pp. 36-40, passim.
[17]See Abbott, "Women in Industry," Appendix A.

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"The Body of Liberties," enacted by Massachusetts in 1641, seemed to have little reference to the men, women and children of the poor. With wages fixed by law, most of the men disfranchised, paupers auctioned off in the streets and children placed at the disposal of master employers, there was little in "The Body of Liberties" for the working people to enthuse over. Within sixteen years after the adoption of this code the Quakers felt its blessings. It was enacted that banished Quakers who returned should have their ears lopped off, and for the third offense should have their tongues pierced with red-hot irons. The following year the death penalty was substituted and four Quakers were hanged on Boston Common within two years. In 1660 the death penalty was repealed and the gentle Puritans contented themselves with flogging their erring brothers.[18]

The "sombre theology of New England," where the "atmosphere was black with sermons," produced the dreary Puritan Sunday. To run on Sunday or to walk in one's garden, to cook, travel, make beds, sweep house, cut hair or shave was to break the law. The mother who kissed her child on Sunday or on fasting day offended God and man. Dancing, card-playing, or making mince pies were unlawful, while only the drum, trumpet and jewsharp were permitted as musical instruments.[19] The minister was the source of all knowledge, the Sabbath began with sundown on Saturday, the tithing man collected fees, the constable arrested the ungodly if they remained away and reported them if they were merry. In short, it was a time when it was impious to be happy and a virtue to be morose.

We may pause here a moment and by way of contrast contemplate the lucrative commerce of Puritan merchants and shippers in the trade in rum and slaves, which is dwelt on more at length in another chapter.

A still had been erected in Boston as early as 1714, and a large business in distilling rum developed by 1735. Molasses and poor sugar were transformed into rum at

[18]Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 166.
[19]Weeden, "Social and Economic History of New England," Vol. I, p. 223.

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Boston, Newport and other seaport towns and exchanged for negroes by these merchants, who in turn sold the blacks for handsome profits. Mixing the rum with water was not uncommon. Captain Potter, about 1764, orders that his rum be watered as much as possible, and to sell by short measure at every opportunity. "All society was fouled in this lust; it was influenced by the passion for wealth; it was callous to the wrongs of imported savage or displaced barbarian. . . . Cool, shrewd, sagacious merchants vied with punctillious, dogmatic priests in promoting this prostitution of industry."[20]

Peter Faneuil, who founded Faneuil Hall, was one of those who engaged in this trade which, together with systematic smuggling, enabled him to accumulate a large fortune. He smuggled goods from Spain and shipped brandy in false casks as rum. These Puritan smugglers and lawbreakers who enforced rigid discipline for the workers of their time and held them as inferior beings in church and society, pocketed their gains from smuggling and the slave trade and consoled themselves with the belief that they were engaged in "God's work" of bringing the Africans within reach of a "gospel dispensation."

"They rolled the whites of their eyes and uttered pious ejaculations as they scanned their ledgers and wrote instructions for turning rum into 'Slops' or human souls immaterially. After attending to such matters these 'respectable' men take leave of their captain, and 'conclude with committing you to the almighty Disposer of all events.' The profanity of sailors is grateful music to ears compelled to listen to the prayers of such damnable hypocrites."[21]

Perhaps the debtors' prison was the most atrocious institution provided for the unfortunate of colonial times, and this, like restricted suffrage and indentured service, survived well into the first half of the nineteenth century. The administration of these prisons and the treatment accorded workingmen reads like a chapter from Stepniak's

[20] Ibid, Vol. II, pp. 459-472, passim.
[21] Ibid, p. 836.

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"Russia Under the Czars." In fact, one gets the impression that the Russian jailers must have become acquainted with the cruelty of prison regime in our early history and adopted some practices of the "Fathers." McMaster's account of these prisons is a sickening one, and we cannot do better than give it here.

"There is indeed scarce a scrap of information," he writes, "bearing upon the subject extant which does not go to prove beyond question that the generation which witnessed the Revolution was less merciful and tender-hearted than the generation which witnessed the Civil War. Our ancestors, it is true, put up a just cry of horror at the brutal treatment of their captive countrymen in the (British) prison ships and hulks. . . . Yet even then the face of the land was dotted with prisons where deeds of cruelty were done, *in comparison with which the foulest acts committed in the hulks sink to a contemptible insignificance.* For more than fifty years after the peace there was in Connecticut an underground prison which surpassed in horrors the Black Hole of Calcutta. This den, known as the Newgate prison, was in an old worked-out copper mine in the hills near Granby. There in little pens of wood from thirty to one hundred culprits were immured, their feet made fast to iron bars, and their necks chained to beams in the roof. The darkness was intense; the caves reeked with filth; vermin abounded; water trickled from the room and oozed from the sides of the caverns; huge masses of earth were constantly falling off. *In the dampness and the filth the clothing of the prisoners grew mouldy and rotted away, and their limbs became stiff with rheumatism.* The Newgate prison was perhaps the worst in the country, yet in every county were jails such as would now be thought unfit places of habitation for the vilest and most loathsome of beasts. . . . Not a ray of light ever penetrated them. In jails in Massachusetts the cells were so small that the prisoners were lodged in hammocks swung one over the other. In Philadelphia the keeps were eighteen by twenty feet, and so

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crowded that at night each prisoner had a space of six feet by two to lie down in.

"Into such pits and dungeons all classes of offenders of both sexes were indiscriminately thrust. It is, therefore, not at all surprising that *they became seminaries of every conceivable form of vice, and centres of the most disgusting diseases.* Prostitutes plied their calling openly in the presence of men and women of decent station, and guilty of no crime but an inability to pay their debts. . . .

"No crime known to the law brought as many to the jails as the crime of debt, and the class most likely to get into debt was the most defenseless and dependent, the great body of servants, of artisans, and of laborers, those, in short, who depended on their daily wages for their daily bread. *One hundred years ago the laborer who fell from a scaffold or lay sick of a fever was sure to be seized by the sheriff the moment he recovered, and be carried to jail for the bill of a few dollars which had been run up during his illness at the huckster's or the tavern.*

"Men confined as witnesses were compelled to mingle with the forger besmeared with the filth of the pillory, and the fornicator streaming with blood from the whipping post, while here and there among the throng were culprits whose ears had been cropped, or whose arms, fresh from the branding iron, emitted the stench of scorched flesh. . . . The treadmill was always going. The pillory and the stocks were never empty. The shears, the branding iron, and the lash were never idle for a day. In Philadelphia the wheel-barrow men still went about the streets in gangs, or appeared with huge clogs and chains hung to their necks. . . .

"The misery of the unfortunate creatures cooped up in the cells, even in the most humanely kept prisons, surpasses in horror anything ever recorded in fiction. No attendance was provided for the sick. No clothes were distributed to the naked. Such a thing as a bed was rarely seen, and this soon became so foul with insects that the owner dispensed with it gladly. Many of the inmates of

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the prisons passed y ears without so much as washing themselves. *Their hair grew long. Their bodies were covered with scabs and lice, and emitted a horrible stench. Their clothing rotted from their backs and exposed their bodies tormented with all manner of skin diseases and a yellow flesh cracking open with filth."*[22]

One grows sick at the recital when we reflect that *these horrors continued for fifty years after the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.* Not until the rise of the labor movement in the first quarter of the nineteenth century did the "statesmen" take cognizance of this system of imprisoning poor men for debt and allowing them to rot of neglect and disease.

The debtors' prisons were provided expressly for poor men. Murderers and counterfeiters had their wants generally provided for by the state, but unless the poor debtor was provided for by friends or charitable societies, he was left to rot in his rags. The low wages paid necessarily increased this class of "criminals" and they were helpless to defend themselves. When they did organize to improve their lot with the opening years of the nineteenth century, *they were frequently tried for conspiracy and jailed.*[32]

The number in debtors' prisons and the magnitude of their 'crimes" are of interest to their descendants of today. In 1816 there were 1,984 debtors imprisoned in New York City, of whom 1,129 owed less than fifty dollars and 729 owed less than twenty-five dollars each. "Every one of them would have starved to death but for the kindness of the humane society." One man in Vermont owed a firm of two, fifty-four cents. By dividing the debt the victim was imprisoned on two counts of twenty-seven cents each. The costs piled up a total of $14.54, for which he was held responsible. In Boston—"the cradle of liberty!" —between 1820 and 1822, 3,492 debtors were jailed which affected 10,000 human beings. One woman was taken from her home and two children for a debt of $3.60. One

[22]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, pp. 98-101.
[32]See Chapter IX.

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man was imprisoned thirty years and a fund of $3,000 was raised *"to pay the jail fees and costs that had accumulated during the long period of confinement."* In Philadelphia —"the city of brotherly love!"—in 1828, 1,085 debtors were jailed; their total debts were $25,409; amount recovered by creditors, $295; cost of maintaining the prison, $285,000! In 1831 the same city held forty debtors owing a total of $23. *"One man owed two cents, another seventy-two cents."* This penalizing of poverty began to disappear in response to the early labor agitation, the last states to abolish it being Connecticut in 1837, Louisiana in 1840, Missouri in 1845, Alabama in 1848.[24]

The laws and the legal practices of the time were admirably arranged so that only the poor man owing a small sum should go to jail, while the wealthy man owing a larger amount was either not liable, or could get a stay of execution, or with good legal talent could avoid conviction. An old law of Pennsylvania *gave magistrates jurisdiction without appeal in cases of debt under forty shillings,* or $5.33. "When the debt exceeded that sum the debtor was entitled to a stay of execution. *But no such privilege was accorded the wretch who owed a sixpence or a shilling. . . ."*[52] Law and its enforcement could not be better calculated to render the rich immune and to jail the helpless and dependent.

The federal government admirably expressed this attitude of leniency toward the capitalist class. It followed the policy of remitting tariff duties to the trading class for periods of ten, twelve and eighteen months. This gave wealthy traders and shippers the free use of government money. John Jacob Astor, founder of the Astor fortune, had a loan of over $5,000,000 from this source. Sometimes these traders would fail—one house failed owing the government $3,000,000—*but in no case were these capitalists imprisoned for debt, though they never paid a cent they*

[24] McMaster, "The Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," pp. 63-66.
[25] Ibid, p. 50.

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owed.[26] This happened frequently during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

This review of the status of workingmen reveals at least the fact that civilization in America, from settlement times down to a period within the memory of some still living, has been an unbroken development of aristocracy and class privileges. Some features of this development, notably white slavery, the white slave trade, and debtors' prisons, will come as a surprise to those who have been led to look on the past as a "Golden Age" and its prominent men as heroic figures. Our examination also shows that the American Revolution, coming in the name of "equality of rights," constituted no break in the forms of class rule and the institutions based on fraud and conquest.

It was the workers of brawn and brain, through organization, sacrifice and martyrdom, that abolished the debtors' prison, won the franchise, abolished conspiracy laws and won the right to associate together for the common good of their class.

It was an obscure workingman, William Lloyd Garrison, who, on the first day of the year 1831, issued a little sheet, nine by fourteen inches, *The Liberator,* making a demand which after some thirty years of hesitation and compromise and betrayal, the "statesmen" had to carry into execution in the exigency of a civil war. It was humble men like Garrison or those like Wendell Phillips, deserting his class and deserted by it, allowing no article cursed with the slave system to cross his threshold;[27] facing hissing mobs organized by the "pillars of society," and refusing allegiance to a constitution that was denounced as "a league with death and a covenant with hell"—these men lashed the "statesmen" on to the overthrow of black servitude. These men, and the unknown pioneers of the labor movement, forced the issue on the evils we have discussed, while others were either silent or apologized for, or defended the institutions of their class regime.

[26] Myers, "History of the Great American Fortunes," Vol. I, pp. 79-80.
[27] Sears, "Wendell Phillips, Orator and Agitator," p. 365.

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Chapter VII

Causes of the American Revolution

Our survey of historical conditions in the colonies gives us a fairly accurate idea of the society out of which came the movement that resulted in breaking the ties of dependence on Great Britain. If our account is a correct one, we can only retain the general belief that the American Revolution was a popular uprising of the whole people by assuming that there was a sudden change of heart on the part of the great planters, the traders in black and white slaves, and other sections of the aristocracy. But this assumption is shattered by the facts which our investigation has revealed.

This consideration also disposes of the historical traditions that are taught children in the schools and suggests that another explanation must be found for the causes of the American Revolution. Fortunately, evidence exists in abundance to show that *it was a revolt of the aristocracy fought by the workers under the delusion that the grandiloquent phrases of the Declaration of Independence implied greater opportunities and liberties for the long-suffering laborers.*

The civilization of that day was such a system of class domination that great difficulty was encountered in getting enough enlistments in the Continental army to present a fighting force to the British invaders. Many who did enlist did so only after promises of certain rewards. But even promised rewards did not prevent constant desertions, which provoked the despair of Washington revealed by him in his correspondence with Congress and with personal friends.

The causes of the Revolution may be traced to the attitude of the ruling classes of Great Britain toward the colonies. From the time of the discovery of America these

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classes regarded the New World as a place of investment. As early as 1651 a navigation act was passed forbidding importation of goods into England except in English ships, or ships of the colony exporting the goods, and another act provided that no goods should be shipped to countries other than England and her colonies. This aroused the resentment of the trading class of the colonies and gave a strong impulse to smuggling which later became a profitable calling for many of these traders.

More drastic laws were passed one hundred years later. In 1750 Parliament passed acts prohibiting the erection of any mill or engine for slitting or rolling iron, or any plating forge or any steel furnace. Hatters were not allowed to take more than two apprentices at a time or any for more than seven years. It was made illegal to manufacture hats or woolens in one colony and sell in another. These laws were generally violated by resorting to smuggling.[1]

In 1764 further laws were enacted restricting commerce and manufacture. The imposition of duties aroused the ire of the commercial class, but the method of punishing violation of the acts increased discontent. The smuggler was tried in the courts of admiralty and deprived of trial by jury. The judge, who was a creature of the crown, was paid out of the fines which he himself assessed and so had every reason to convict upon the slightest evidence. The wealthy smugglers were thus the victims of a repressive policy. It may be said, too, that the British government was forced to abolish trial by jury and substitute admiralty courts *because the wealthy smugglers exercised such power and influence that few juries dared to convict them.*

In spite of the growing discontent of the influential classes, the British government continued its policy. Navigation laws closed colonial ports against foreign vessels

[1]The English ruling class acted in accord with the mercantile theory which regarded colonies as markets for the products of the home country for which the colonies were expected to supply the raw materials.—Howard, "Preliminaries of the Revolution," pp. 51-62, passim.

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and allowed them to export only to other British colonies. Duties were also levied on trade between the colonies. *The British capitalists, sweating fortunes out of their working class victims, wanted no competitors in the colonies to challenge their commerce on the seas. American employers and traders wanted the unrestricted opportunities to exploit their workers which British capitalists were enjoying.* It was a quarrel between two ruling classes divided by a vast expanse of water, and each envying the opportunities of the other. Commerce, shipbuilding, industry and agriculture had developed to such an extent at the dawn of the Revolution that these acts of Parliament became a serious menace to the incomes of the colonial masters.

Smuggling was developed to a fine art. A pamphlet written in 1774 asserts that nearly all merchants were smugglers and perjurers and "that such a system was ruining the morals of the country."[2] In fact, smuggling became so popular with merchants and shippers that they lost all sense of gratitude toward Great Britain when France was endeavoring to annex the colonies to Canada—an event which the colonial aristocracy dreaded. While Great Britain was spending large sums in defending the colonies against French aggression, "it was found that the French fleets, the French garrisons, and the French West India islands, were systematically supplied with large quantities of provisions by the New England colonies. . . . The smuggling was even defended with a wonderful cynicism on the ground that it was good policy to make as much money as possible out of the enemy."[3] The enormous extent of this illicit trade with the enemy is shown by the fact that the total revenue collected in the colonial custom houses amounted to between 1,000 and 2,000 pounds a year, and the cost of collecting this revenue was between 7,000 and 8,000 pounds.[4] The colonial merchants with French or Dutch passports and sometimes under flags of truce traded

[2]Fisher, "True History of the Revolution," p. 42.
[3]Lecky, "The American Revolution," p. 47.
[4]Ibid, p. 52.

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with the enemy. They eased their consciences with the excuse that if they were to contribute their share toward the defense the money must come from this illegal trade.[5]

Writing of the period immediately preceding the Revolution, Weeden asserts that "Information given against smugglers engaged in evading the revenue would cause a riot, and one informant at Newbury was tarred and feathered. An importer at Newport had sworn to his cargo of molasses at 50 hds. The count showed more than 80, though some had been landed already. The cargo was seized, but a mob in disguise came at night and took away all the cargo except the 50 hhds., which had been regularly entered. Vessels were generally brought into port after dark, their cargoes being discharged and secreted under cover of the friendly night."[6] To add to this ingratitude, the French were no sooner expelled from Canada than the smuggling traders openly joined in the chorus for separation from their protector.

The Boston Tea Party, which has inspired so much patriotic oratory, can be traced to the practice of smuggling. The tax on tea made it very profitable for smugglers to deal in this commodity. The trade in tea was largely in the hands of the East India company, a chartered corporation of Great Britain. John Hancock and other tea merchants had smuggled large quantities of tea into Boston and were doing a large business. In the meantime the financial affairs of the East India company became very precarious. Its stock was depreciating and it was feared that the collapse of the company would bring on a panic in England. There were 17,000,000 pounds of the East India company's tea in British warehouses for which there was no demand, because of the large quantities smuggled into the colonies from Holland. Parliament decided to repeal the tax on tea and the New England smugglers

[5] Howard, "Preliminaries of the Revolution," p. 71.

[6] Weeden, "Economic and Social History of New England," Vol. II, p. 762. See also Schlesinger, "The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776," Chap. I.

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became panic stricken. But the masses of the people "were pleased at the prospect of drinking tea at less expense than ever." The repeal of the tax meant that the East India company would be able to sell tea at much smaller prices than Hancock and his fellow smugglers could. *Their profits would not only be lost, but their tea would rot on their hands. Competition with the British corporation would bankrupt them.* After comparing notes Hancock, known in Boston as the "Prince of Smugglers," with his fellow merchants disguised as Indians, boarded their rival's ships and threw the dreaded tea into the harbor.[7]

Smuggling, of course, was not confined to tea alone, for in all forms of trade it "proved a sure road to wealth. In every town prominent characters could be pointed out, who, when the states were under British rule, had constantly stowed away in their cellars and attics goods they would have been loath to have the officers of the customs to see. . . . Of this trade Boston was long the center, and many a merchant of high repute did not disdain to engage in it. Thus, on the very day when the farmers and ploughmen of Middlesex drove the British out of Lexington, John Hancock was to have stood trial for defrauding the customs."[8]

One historian[9] speaks of the "moral grandeur" of the Boston Tea Party and regards it as an "effort to defend the eternal principles of natural justice." This is eternal nonsense. Just what is "eternal" in the profits of tea smugglers and their rivals, the coiner of eloquent phrases leaves unexplained.

Other influential "pillars" of society were added to

[7]Fisher, "True History of the American Revolution," pp. 105-106; "Old South Leaflets," No. 68; Wilson, "A History of the American People," Vol. II, Chap. II.

[8]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, p. 63.

[9]Fiske, "The American Revolution," p. 92. "Hobbes and the Philosophers," writes Paul Lafargue, "who speak of natural right, natural religion, natural philosophy, are lending to Dame Nature their notions of right, religion and philosophy, which are anything but natural. What should we say of the mathematician who should attribute to nature his concepts of the metric system and should philosophize on the natural meter and millimeter?"—Lafargue, "Social and Philosophical Studies," p. 117, footnote.

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the forces demanding separation from Great Britain when that government laid a tax on rum and molasses. This act aroused the Puritan slavers of New England, whose "eternal principles" and profits were based on the slave trade in negroes. "If the infamy of holding slaves belongs to the South," writes McMaster, "the greater infamy of supplying slaves must be shared by England and the North. While the states were yet colonies, to buy negroes and sell them into slavery had become a source of profit to the inhabitants of many New England towns. . . . Molasses brought from Jamaica was turned to rum; the rum dispatched to Africa bought negroes; the negroes, carried to Jamaica or the Southern ports, were exchanged for molasses, which, in turn, taken back to New England was quickly made into rum."[10] This trade was seriously hampered by the tax mentioned as it decreased the profits of the slavers. The rum was a delicacy also much prized by ministers of God.[11] This traffic had developed early in the history of the colonies and the slave owners of the South pointed to it as an example of the hypocrisy of New England which denounced slavery. In 1736 Colonel William Byrd, of Virginia, wrote to the Earl of Egmont the following sarcastic letter regarding the pretensions of New England "democracy": "Your Lordp's (Lordship's) opinion concerning Rum and Negroes is certainly very just, and your excluding both from your colony of Georgia will be very happy; tho' with respect to Rum, the Saints of New England I fear will find out some trick to evade your Act of Parliament."[12]

The British molases act passed in 1733 laid a heavy tax on West India imports into the colonies from foreign countries, and seven years later the agent of Rhode Island in London was representing the opposition to the act.[13] The act was intended to revive the stagnant trade of the British

[10]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. II, pp. 15-16.
[11]Thwaites, "The Colonies," p. 185.
[12]Hart, "Source Book of American History," pp. 119-120.
[13]Weeden, "Economic and Social History of New England," Vol. II, pp. 583-584.

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West Indies and discourage trade with French and Dutch rivals.[14]

In 1764 the Sugar Act was renewed and the duty on molasses reduced with the expectation that the smaller rate would produce a revenue. Committees of correspondence became active in opposition to the act. The old act levied a duty of 6d. per gallon on molasses imported from ports other than British, which, if collected, was practically prohibitive. Smuggling brought both molasses and sugar in free, but the act irritated those engaged in the great commerce in rum and negroes. The act "swept away the foundation of trade and threatened the whole economic structure of New England."[15]

The distilleries of Boston and other ports of the New England coast, especially Newport, Rhode Island, became great in number. There were twenty-two stills in this town and Massachusetts distilled 15,000 hogsheads annually.[16] Rhode Island had 150 vessels engaged in the trade and rum was the main article exchanged for slaves in Africa. This wretched commerce is hardly compatible with the sentiment that "all men are created equal," etc. The combination of smugglers and slave traders in New England exercised considerable influence in forming opinion favorable to independence.

In October, 1774, the Continental Congress, seeming to appreciate the contradiction in their professions respecting liberty and the traffic in slaves and wishing to appear well before the world, passed an act declaring, "We will neither import nor purchase any slave imported after the first day of December next." But it is notorious that the slavers continued their business and it was thirteen years before Massachusetts passed an act prohibiting it.[17] In the same year Rhode Island passed an act prohibiting importation of

[14]Greene, "Provincial America," p. 179.
[15]Weeden, Vol. II, p. 753. A Boston town meeting in 1764 prepared instructions, written by Samuel Adams, advising its representatives to oppose enforcement of the molasses act.—Howard, "Preliminaries of the Revolution," p. 110.
[16]DuBois, "Suppression of the Slave Trade," pp. 27-28-29.
[17]Ibid, p. 45.

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slaves. The preamble stated that the inhabitants would be inconsistent to hold slaves while fighting for liberties themselves, and then inserted a clause providing "that nothing in this act shall extend, or be deemed to extend," to the slave trade.[18] Prohibiting slavery and legalizing the slave trade harmonized with the interests of the dealers in slaves and rum.

The same juggling is witnessed in adopting the Declaration of Independence. The original draft contained a clause charging King George with waging "cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating and carrying them into slavery into another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither." The Southern delegates united with many of the Northern delegates in striking out the clause. Jefferson, writing of this act, says that "our Northern brethren . . . felt a little tender under these censures; for tho' their people have very few slaves themselves, yet they had been very considerable carriers of them to others."[19]

The Southern planters, though slower to endorse separation, also joined for motives no more creditable than those actuating the Northern traffickers in slaves and their colleagues, the merchant smugglers. Many of these planters were in debt to British merchants and saw in the Revolution an opportunity to repudiate their debts. A century before the Revolution the Southern planters were often deeply in debt to British merchants, owing to the credit system of transacting business and the long delays in exchange between the two countries. In 1732 Parliament passed an act to protect British merchants, to whom were due many debts owing by colonial merchants. "British merchants . . . complained of legal obstacles in the collection of debts due them in America." The act provided that debts due to British merchants "might be proved by testimony

[18] Ibid, p. 36.
[19] Hart, "American History Told by Contemporaries," Vol. II, p. 539.

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taken in England" and making colonial real estate liable to seizure for payment.[20]

A manifesto was issued in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1774, which stated that "The planters are greatly in arrears to the merchants; a stoppage of importation (of slaves) would give them all an opportunity to extricate themselves from debt."[21]

Wendell Phillips in a speech delivered in Boston, 1861, summed up the motives of both planter and merchant in demanding independence. With all of his admiration for the revolutionary leaders he was conscious of the material interests that prompted the activity of the two classes mentioned. He declared: "It is not always . . . ideas or moral principles that push the world forward. Selfish interests play a large part in the work. Our Revolution of 1776 succeeded because trade and wealth joined hands with principle and enthusiasm—a union rare in the history of revolutions. *Northern merchants fretted at England's refusal to allow them direct trade with Holland and the West Indies. Virginia planters, heavy mortgaged, welcomed anything that would postpone payment of their debts. . . . So merchant and planter joined heartily . . . to get independence. To merchant independence meant only direct trade—to planter cheating his creditors.*"[22]

The home government also endeavored to restrict settlement along the coast, as the farther into the interior the immigrants went the more difficult it was to tax them and to retain their loyalty. But this policy also interfered with the plans of land speculators whose incomes were derived from luring men into the wilderness. The more people the speculators could induce to go West, the more profits they could make from their lands deals. Washington, Hamilton and Morris were interested in land speculation. Washing-

[20]Green, "Provincial America," p. 180. In Glasgow "not less than half a million of money was due by the colonists of Maryland and Virginia alone to its merchants."—Howard, "Preliminaries of the Revolution," pp. 162-163.

[21]DuBois, "Suppression of the Slave Trade," p. 44.

[22]Phillips, "Speeches, Lectures and Addresses," Vol. I, p. 373. See also Schlesinger, "The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776," pp. 35-39.

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ton had good reasons for being a rebel, as he had surveyed lands outside the royal grant and in exceeding the powers of his commission was liable to prosecution as a law breaker.[23]

The king's proclamation of 1763 had forbidden governors to "grant warrant of survey" or patents for lands beyond the sources of rivers that flow into the Atlantic and prohibiting private persons from purchasing or settling on these reserved lands under a heavy penalty. The object of this action, according to the Earl of Hillsborough, was to confine the population to the coast lands under the watchful eyes of the ruling class and to keep them "within reach of the trade and commerce" of Great Britain.[24]

One may easily understand how this act and the numerous acts against manufacturing and commerce aroused the land speculating, trading and manufacturing classes. But one more act had a vital influence in provoking the resentment of all those who held indentured servants and those engaged in the servant trade. This was the Stamp Act of 1765, and so far as the writer knows no historian has pointed out how the enforcement of this act threatened the entire system of indentured service.

This act affected the gains of those interested in the traffic, either as dealers in or owners of servants. The act provided that the full sums of money or other considerations agreed upon between masters and servants should be correctly entered on indentures and the date of signing be given. The penalty for violation of this provision was a forfeit of double the sum or other considerations agreed upon. Masters or mistresses could be sued at any time during the term specified in indentures for violation of this law, and such violation rendered such indentures void. If masters or mistresses failed to pay the stamp duties on indentures within a specified time then the servants could pay double the duty, and in case the master or mistress did not repay the servant within three months on demand, the

[23] Simons, "Class Struggles in America," p. 18.
[24] Howard, "Preliminaries of the Revolution," pp. 229-230.

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servant could sue for recovery of the amount. The payment of double duty by servants also released them from all obligations specified in the indentures; they were "discharged from all actions, penalties, forfeitures and damages for not serving the time for which they were respectively bound, contracted for or agreed to serve." Any printer, stationer or other persons who sold indentures without adding a warning clause stating that they must bear date of execution and the terms agreed upon; that the duty on them was paid and a receipt given on the back of indentures by the distributor of stamps, or his substitute, was liable to prosecution and to forfeit the sum of ten pounds.[25]

The act struck at the entire system of indentured service and the traffic based upon it. Investments in servants became more hazardous and returns from their labor were not as certain. The "soul drivers" and ship masters engaged in the servant trade could not but feel resentful that their incomes were jeopardized by this act of Parliament. Not that its enforcement would overthrow this servitude. But it did place obstacles in the way of falsifying indentures; it taxed the system; it gave opportunity for many servants to be released from service when their owners evaded the duties placed on indentures; and had its influence in transforming masters, who held white laborers in servitude, into rebels. Yet this important fact is almost entirely ignored by writers seeking causes for the Revolution.

Many laborers, artisans and small farmers were indifferent to the agitation for liberty and independence. The redemptioner was a bond slave and knew that it made no difference whether he was a subject of the British crown or of the home exploiters. The "free" laborer did not enthuse, for the laws that fixed his status as an underling and providing imprisonment for debt were being enforced by the very men who were talking so glibly about independence. The slaves, of course, were dumb, unable to speak for themselves, and nothing in the Revolution held

[25] See Hart and Channing, "American History Leaflets," No. 21, May, 1895, for a full text of the Stamp Act.

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out any promise of release for them. The small farmers, too, were on the whole indifferent, for taxes fell heavily on their shoulders and the high prices of living and excessive rates of interest made them suspicious of the coast merchants and money lenders. The lot of the toilers of every class was not to be envied, and though having little chance to secure an education, their experience with the wealthy classes taught them to beware when the masters came bearing gifts.

The Declaration of Independence, though it does not mention a single distinct working class grievance, by its eloquent phrases deluded large numbers into the belief that a new era was dawning for them. But this was not a unanimous sentiment by any means—either of the poor or the wealthy classes. John Adams wrote that "New York and Pennsylvania were so nearly divided, if their propensity was not against us, that if New England on one side and Virginia on the other had not kept them in awe, they would have joined the British." In another letter he declares, "on mature deliberation I conclude . . . that more than one-third of influential characters were against it."[26]

In fact, the Revolution was the work of an aggressive minority, "who succeeded in committing an undecided and fluctuating majority to courses for which they had little love, and leading them step by step to a position from which it was imposible to recede."[27] Nor did the "patriots" rely on persuasion alone. *The more effective arguments of tar and feathers, physical assault, the boycott and exile* were employed against those who regarded the claims of the "fathers" with suspicion or openly opposed them.

The wide extent and character of the violence employed by Samuel Adams and other rebels is instructive. "Men were ridden and tossed on fence rails; were gagged and bound for days at a time; pelted with stones; fastened in rooms where there was a fire with the chimney stopped

[26] Faust, "The German Element in the United States," Vol. I, p. 289.
[27] Lecky, "The American Revolution," p. 224.

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on top; advertised as public enemies, so that they would be cut off from all dealing with their neighbors. They had bullets shot into their bedrooms; money or valuable plate extorted to save them from violence. . . . Their houses and ships were burnt; they were compelled to pay the guards who watched them in their houses; and when carted about for the mob to stare at and abuse they were compelled to pay something at every town."[28]

Chief Justice and Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts, who was born in America, was eminent as a historian, had opposed the restrictive acts against commerce and the Stamp Act, became disgusted with these rioters. He paid for his opposition in the memorable Hutchinson Riot in Boston, August 26, 1765. Josiah Quincy, Jr., writes of the mob besieging Hutchinson's house, the latter barely escaping serious injury or death. The rioters gutted the house and destroyed nearly everything of value, including some records and rare documents of great value to historians. These were irreparable losses to Hutchinson, who was occupied in writing a history of New England. He was a pathetic figure when he entered court next day with tears in his eyes and clothed in garments, part of which he was compelled to borrow.[29]

Among the favored classes who refused support to the Revolution may be mentioned the following: The official class holding various positions in the civil, military and naval services of the government; Colonial politicians who believed the Revolution could not succeed and who expected their loyalty to be rewarded by offices and titles and the confiscated estates of the rebels who would be either exiled or hung; commercial men having tangible property and considerable to lose, who would rather bear the restrictive acts of Parliament than to stake all on the

[28]Fisher, "True History of the American Revolution," p. 158. "Much personal property and even real estate were unceremoniously appropriated by the armed forces of the Revolution, at least under some slight color of legality, although often it was barefaced robbery." Porter, "A History of Suffrage in the United States," pp. 41-42.

[29]Hart, "American History Told by Contemporaries," Vol. II, pp. 398-399.

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Revolution; professional men, such as clergymen, physicians, lawyers and teachers, a clear majority of whom seem to have been against the ultimate measures of the Revolution; those of no particular classification, who by habit or training were conservative and opposed any change in the established regime.[30]

One agency established to promote the agitation was the secret "committees of correspondence," which enabled the agitators to keep in communication with each other. Much of the coercion had its source in these secret groups. The Continental Congress was not a body whose members were elected by popular vote. The delegates sent by Connecticut, New York and Maryland were chosen by these committees.[31] The legislatures that sent delegates were all representative of property for, as we have seen, the workers without property were disfranchised. The committees were "always in session and no governor could dissolve or prorogue" them.[32] They watched the movement of their opponents, exchanged information, boycotted their enemies and drove Tories to Canada or England.

By silencing their enemies through terrorism, or exiling them to Canada or New York, which was largely Tory in sentiment; by constant appeals to patriotism, threats, promises of the rewards and glorious future to be realized, sufficient numbers of adventurers, politicians and poor farmers were induced to enlist and present the appearance of a fighting force against Great Britain. Though pictures of the revolutionary army generally presents its recruits in neat uniforms, in reality they resembled a "Coxy Army" more than anything else. Washington's soldiers were a ragged, ill-equipped, undisciplined crowd of men, many of whom enlisted half-heartedly and in every defeat there were desertions. During the terrible winter at Valley Forge, when thy nearly starved or froze, the farmers in surrounding territory daily carted provisions to the British army in Phil-

[30] Smith, "The Spirit of American Government," pp. 15-16.
[31] Fisher, "True History of the American Revolution," p. 123.
[32] Fiske, "The American Revolution," p. 79.

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adelphia. Washington's scanty rations that winter were partly secured by scouting parties capturing these supplies. The army was not a large one—about 25,000 men at one time, but the number frequently declined to ten, six and even four thousand.

An interesting fact generally ignored by American historians is that Lord Howe, commander of the British forces, was a member of the Whig party, which sympathized with the revolutionists and defended them in British politics. Howe conducted his campaign to the entire satisfaction of Washington and his generals. The British general delayed and feasted in New York and Philadelphia, giving ample opportunity for the rebel forces to make the best of their precarious situation. *Howe could have annihilated the rebels at Bunker Hill, Long Island, Brandywine, and especially at Valley Forge, had he any intention of doing so.* When he was recalled Parliament investigated his peculiar conduct and only influential friends saved him from punishment.[33]

A horde of adventurers, petty grafters and other designing men fished in the troubled waters of the Revolution and followed in the wake of the armies to pick up what loot they could. "Among the enterprising men who had thrown themselves into the first movement of the Revolution were many of broken fortunes and doubtful antecedents, many ardent speculators, many clever and unscrupulous adventurers. Such men found in . . . the sudden fluctuations of the currency . . . a new and sinister interest in the continuance of the struggle." One adventurer became a brigadier general and paid debts amounting to nearly 8,000 pounds with 1,000 pounds of gold and silver. Noah Webster observed that "The first visible effect of an augmentation of the medium and the consequent fluctuation of value was a host of jockeys, who followed a species of commerce, and subsisted on the ignorance and honesty of the country people; or, in other words, upon the difference

[33]See Fisher, "True History of the American Revolution," for maps of the battles and an extended discussion of Howe's campaign.

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in the value of the currency in different places. Perhaps we may safely estimate that not less than 20,000 men in America left honest callings and applied themselves to this knavish traffic."[84]

The army itself was demoralized by these and other similar practices and it became difficult to maintain discipline. As an aid in this direction offending soldiers were given one hundred lashes or more on the naked back while tied to a tree. The whip was formed of "several knotted cords, which sometimes cut through the skin at every stroke." Some disobedient soldiers were punished "at several different times, a certain number of stripes repeated at intervals of two or three days, in which case the wounds are in a state of inflammation, and the skin rendered more sensibly tender; and the terror of the punishment is greatly aggravated."[85]

One other consideration we have to offer as among the contributing causes of the Revolution. The acts restraining commerce and manufacturers were aimed, as we have seen, by the British ruling class against the colonial ruling class. This was sufficient to arouse the resentment of the latter and drive most of them to revolt. But our colonial manufacturers were also aware of the great advantages which their British brethren possessed in the new machinery that Arkwright and others were inventing across the sea. Machines for carding and spinning were fast displacing the old hand processes in making cloth. The small skill required to operate these machines enabled the British factory lords to sweat large numbers of women and children. To guard this advantage the British Parliament passed acts prohibiting the exportation of machines, plans or models of machines or any tools used in cotton or linen manufacture, under penalty of 200 pounds. Even the possession of them for export rendered the offender liable to arrest. Watt was also making his first improvements on Newcomen's engine.

These inventions brought with them the crucifixion of

[84] Lecky, "The American Revolution," pp. 292-293.
[85] Hart, "American History Told by Contemporaries," Vol. II, pp. 493-494.

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men, women and children of the working class. Children from seven to twelve and fourteen years of age were worked fourteen and sixteen hours per day under brutal taskmasters. Women frequently fainted at machines or gave birth to children on factory floors. The workhouses and almshouses of London and Birmingham and other cities were raided for children, idiots being taken with the rest. The factories became torture chambers and in some cases places of murder, with the child slaves as victims.

Every ship and every mail that came to America brought news of these events and stimulated the desire to apply the new processes here. But British acts stood in the way and we have already noted the efforts of the colonial masters to make child labor profitable. Although the colonial appetite for child labor was whetted by the industrial changes in England, it was not until 1789 that the new machinery was secured. In that year Samuel Slater, "The Father of American Manufacturers," established the first cotton mill in this country, in Rhode Island, *and all of his employes were children between seven and twelve years of age!*[36] From that time the profitable exploitation of children became one of the "inalienable rights of man." Furthermore, the second act of the first United States Congress was for the "encouragement and the protection of manufactures by levying a protective tariff,"[37] and Hamilton, in his famous "Report on Manufactures," urged that *"women and children are rendered more useful by manufacturing establishments than they otherwise would be."*[38] The "Fathers" were not slow to follow their British kin's example after they had settled their temporary quarrel, and were free to take the child from the cradle and the woman from the home.

From the foregoing review it will be seen that the merchant smugglers, the New England slavers, the land speculators, the Southern planters, the money lenders and a host of adventurers with itching palms were interested in

[36] Abbott, "Women in Industry," p. 44.
[37] Wright, "The Industrial Evolution of the United States," p. 118.
[38] Abbott, "Women in Industry," p. 50.

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fomenting the agitation for independence. When the Declaration of Independence passes from eloquent phrases to an enumeration of grievances these are seen to be ills that affected some one of these classes. The tyranny of George III is denounced; he has taken away their charters, hired Indians in the war, denied them trial by jury, restricted their commerce and industry, kidnaped their citizens on the high seas, quartered armed troops among them, and in general denied them the "liberties" of British subjects.

The poor classes, composed of poor farmers, the pioneers on the frontier, the bond and chattel slaves, the laborers and artisans, could have drawn up an indictment against these "patriots" and included in it the following charges:

If Britain kidnaps American sailors in time of war, you kidnap us in Europe in times of peace and sell us, our wives and children, into slavery; if Britain hires the Indian as a soldier, you allow the savage to scalp us on the frontier; if Britain suppresses your commerce, you suppress our right to associate and deprive us of the franchise; if Britain imprisons your sailors in her ships, you imprison us for debt and allow us to rot in rags and filth; if Britain has taken away your charters we know when you had them you enacted fugitive laws for us when we tried to escape your clutches; if you suffer from British tyranny we suffer because you give us no lien on the products of our labor and frequently cheat us out of our miserable wages; when we are driven to steal bread you place us in the pillory or brand us with irons, while in your law code you class the white indentured slave, the conquered Indian and the enslaved black as merchandise to be bought and sold like cattle. Your declaration is a class declaration. So is ours. Only we represent the toiling masses of these colonies on whose skill, labor and sacrifice your pre-eminence and rule have been established.[39]

[39] "The Declaration of Independence, as has often been remarked, was written as a campaign document; equality was postulated only as a basis for the claim of liberty, a philosophy which the conservatives were willing to endorse when intended for the export trade." Fox, "The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York," p. 85. See also Becker, "The United States, An Experiment in Democracy," Chap. X.

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Such a declaration coming from the masses would set in bold relief the class character of the struggle for independence. That it is a true estimate of the historical conditions of that time will become apparent in the next chapter, where we will consider the treatment accorded the workers after having fought the battles of the interested ruling classes of that time.

That there were men who favored independence from the best of motives no one will deny. That the Revolution was necessary, that it was in accord with human progress, that it overthrew barriers to the further development of society, are also conceded truths. But that it was a spontaneous uprising of all the people, that it was a glorious vindication of the "rights of man," that it was waged by demigods having no sinister ends in view and no unworthy motives to conceal, all this is contradicted by the facts and especially by events that followed when peace was declared. Fundamentally it was a struggle between two ruling classes whose interests clashed. The British masters displayed poor judgment in dealing with their fellow masters on this side of the sea. The laws directed against colonial shippers and manufacturers were the essence of folly. They could have no other result than revolution, for these laws touched the hearts—or incomes, which is the same thing—of our colonial ruling class. When the purse of the exploiter or aristocrat is threatened with depletion all the furies of private gain rage within him. All his views of life and hope of the future are gauged by the condition of his money till. Threaten that and he becomes a rebel; fill it and he remains an enthusiastic supporter of the established regime, a devoted adherent of the vilest practices, a stout defender of institutions that drain wealth from the unpaid toil of others and pours it into his purse. His interests were bound to the revolutionary cause; the triumph of his class meant progress until the twentieth century, when changed conditions make his rule a menace to society and a danger to civilization. As the British ruler gave way to him, so he today must give way to the wealth producing classes who now stand as the incarnation of further progress.

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Chapter VIII

The Constitutional Convention

"It is not too much to say," writes the historian, Fiske, "that the period of five years following the peace of 1783 was the most critical moment in all the history of the American people."[1] It *was* a critical period—for the privileged classes, for it seemed to these that the great landed empire, tremendous resources and power which the Revolution gave them all hung in the balance and with strong possibility that the insurgent poor would secure these advantages for themselves. The workers by their heroism and sacrifices at Bunker Hill and Yorktown; by their sufferings during the terrible winter at Valley Forge, had won the Revolution and were certainly entitled to the fruits of victory or, at least, deserved exceptional consideration.

But the last shot had scarcely been fired when these veterans, retracing their weary steps homeward, were confronted with a terrible situation. It is doubtful whether history affords another such example of the shameless ingratitude displayed by a ruling class toward its benefactors that the "Fathers" displayed toward the poor veterans of the war. Many farmers and laborers found that while they were at the front risking their lives in the struggle *the wealthy classes were confiscating their little farms and household goods for debts contracted during the war and imprisoning thousands for debt.* The rebellion which this process of confiscation provoked constitutes the "critical period" referred to by Fiske. With this historian, as with most others, the poor rebels are viewed as a senseless mob of fanatics for not submitting quietly to the wholesale confiscation without protest.

The war, like all wars, left the country devastated and impoverished and the distress was frightful in all the states.

[1]Fiske, "The Critical Period of Amercian History," p. 55.

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In Vermont "one-half the community was totally bankrupt; the other half was plunged in the depths of poverty. The year which had elapsed since the affair at Yorktown had not brought all the blessings that had been foretold."[2] A large part of the country had been laid waste; commerce was all but suspended and Great Britain still maintained the policy of commercial antagonism toward her late colonies. "What wealth there was lay in the hands of a few score men. The disparity of condition between a laborer and a Charles Carroll or a George Washington was probably greater than exists today between a laborer and a Carnegie. Employment was scarce; the circulating medium fluctuated in value; the workman had no security for his pay, and was frequently defrauded. Wages were paid quarterly, semi-annually or annually. If the workman bought goods on credit, the debtors' prison yawned for him; and, if he was imprisoned, his food and comforts had to be supplied by private charity."[3] The wage of common laborers had fallen to fifty cents a day. Knox writing to Washington in 1786 informed him that many of the discontented pay little or no taxes; "they feel at once their own poverty compared with the opulent," and are ready to use force.[4]

Thousands were scarcely able to keep clothes on their backs or to provide their families with the most common necessities. The money was in the hands of the rich and high rates of interest made it impossible for the leather-breeched mechanic or the debt-ridden farmer to borrow. The sheriffs were selling the poor farmers' property for debts and they endeavored to evade the seizures by hiding furniture or other goods, driving cattle to a neighbor's pasture, or making houses and small farms over to relatives. The debtors' prisons were glutted with victims. In New Hampshire "It was then the fashion, . . . as indeed it was everywhere, to lock men up in jail the moment they were so unfortunate as to owe their fellows a sixpence or a

[2]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, p. 348.
[3]W. J. Ghent, "The American Workman's Golden Age," "The Forum," August, 1901.
[4]McLaughlin, "The Confederation and the Constitution," pp. 150-155.

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shilling. *Had this law been rigorously executed in the autumn of* 1785, *it is probable that not far from two-thirds of the community would have been in prisons.*"[5]

Each colony came out of the Revolution as an independent state, its loyalty to Congress being dependent on its own will. Under the Articles of Confederation, which had created the Congress, the war had been fought to a successful issue. It had raised armies, contracted loans and levied taxes, but it had no power to compel the affiliation or loyalty of the states. It was a product of military necessity hastily called into existence, yet in spite of its imperfections it had survived the stormy period of war. "It could ask for money but not compel payment; it could enter into treaties but not enforce their stipulations; it could provide for raising of armies but not fill their ranks; it could borrow money but take no proper measures for repayment; it could advise and recommend but not command."[6]

It had one legislative body, the Congress, with no senate, supreme court or president to veto its acts. After the war the states, controlled by the property owners, proceeded with legislation regardless of their neighbors. Each regulated commerce and levied duties in its own interests. If one state had endeavored to close her ports to English goods all the others would profit by her sacrifice. British ports were still closed against American merchants unless they patronized English ships. Thirteen different forms of legislation, more or less conflicting, produced anarchy and division. The ruling classes were more or less divided in their scramble for spoils and their opposing jealousies and interests may be seen from the following:

"The commerce which Massachusetts found it to her interest to encourage, Virginia found it to her interest to restrict. New York would not protect the trade in indigo and pitch. South Carolina cared nothing for the success of the fur interests. New England derived great revenues from lumber, oil and potashes; Pennsylvania from corn and

[5] McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, p. 343.
[6] McLaughlin, "The Confederation and the Constitution," p. 501.

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grain, and were in nowise concerned as to the prosperity of the trade of their neighbors. Articles which Connecticut and New Jersey excluded from their ports by heavy tonnage duties entered New York with scarcely any other charges than light money."[7]

All this is evidence of the eagerness of each section of the wealthy classes to profit out of existing conditions without any regard to the interests of their class as a whole. That this is not a biased judgment may be shown by competent authorities. "There was everywhere," says Wilson, 'the same jealous spirit, the same striving for every petty advantage, the same alert and aggressive selfishness."[8] Von Holst is even more positive. "The acquisitions of the war," he writes, "were looked upon as so much booty, of which each state endeavored to secure the lion's share, without the least regard for the well-being or honor of the whole. *In several instances, those who were willing to sell even the honor of their own state showed a bolder front and grew noisier in the hope of increasing their own personal share of the booty and of seeing it turned as soon as possible into jingling gold.*"[9]

But the necessity for unity and a strong centralized government in behalf of the wealthy classes was soon revealed to them by a specter that appeared in the midst of their petty jealousies and scrambles for spoils. The army was restless for its pay and the government's finances were at a low ebb. A number of companies were on the verge of mutiny; one drove Congress out of Philadelphia and another threatened uprising of veterans required the influence of Washington to quell. In fact, by 1790 Great Britain distributed about $16,000,000 among about 4,000 of her loyalists, which "seems to have been much more ample than that which the ragged soldiers of our Revolutionary army ever received from Congress."[10] But the real specter was the growing discontent of the poor farmers and laborers

[7] McMaster, "History," Vol. I, p. 207.
[8] Woodrow Wilson, "History of the American People," Vol. III, p. 54.
[9] Von Holst, "Constitutional History of the United States," Vol. I, p. 48.
[10] Fiske, "Critical Period of American History," p. 130.

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who failed to secure all the blessings the Revolution had promised. Their frightful poverty drove them to desperation. Their "inalienable right to life" was a sham; their "liberty" was imprisonment for debt; their "pursuit of happiness" a phantom.[11]

From Masaschusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire and other states, alarming news came of the growing restlessness among the poor. Mass meetings were being held, petitions circulated and demands made of legislatures for measures of relief. Debts had been contracted in depreciated currency and the wealthy classes were demanding payment in gold. Naturally, the poor debtors demanded paper currency and just as naturally their exploiters opposed it. The more paper that was issued the more demoralized the currency became. Historians have gone into hysterics in denouncing this demand of debtors for cheap money, but the fact, which we have referred to before, *that land speculators bought up millions of this cheap paper and palmed it off on the government for great tracts of land,* is generally passed over in silence or commended as an example of "farsighted thrift."[12]

In some states men were on the march to the seats of county or state governments, many of them armed and determined that the glorious promises should be in some measure fulfilled. Lawyers were hated and despised for their part in confiscating wealth in payment of debts. They were overwhelmed with cases and the courts could not try half of them.[13] The debtors exercised considerable influence in number of states and in Rhode Island half a million dol-

[11] McLaughlin, "The Confederation and the Constitution," p. 140. A French traveler in Rhode Island mentions idle men standing with folded arms at street corners; houses in ruins; grass growing in the streets; windows stuffed with rags, and discontent everywhere.—p. 150.

[12] The following may be cited as an example: Prominent officers of the army organized the Ohio Company, a land speculating company, in 1786. "The money scrip of the Confederation was bought up and used for the purchase of land in the new public domain. Subscriptions and systematic corporate action began to make the settlement an enterprise of forethought and associated effort, like the settlement of the first colonies themselves." Wilson, "History of the American People," Vol. III, p. 53. "Enterprise and forethought!" What tender discrimination in favor of the financial "jockeys" and speculators that Noah Webster declaimed against!

[13] McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, p. 302.

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lars in scrip were issued which began to depreciate. Prices rose rapidly. The city merchants were raising prices and poor farmers saw in this an effort to defeat paper money. A law was rushed through the legislature commanding every one to accept paper as an equivalent of gold. Violations of the act were subject to a fine of $500 and a loss of the right of suffrage. The city merchants closed their shops and the farmers decided not to send any produce to the cities. They tried to sell in Boston and New York, but met opposition in these cities. Their apples rotted and they burned corn for fuel. The farmers were threatened with force and town meetings were held in all parts of the state to consider the grave situation. Farmers became bankrupt, merchants left the state, and the only thing certain was universal uncertainty.

The drum sounded in New Hampshire and several hundred men armed with muskets, swords and staves entered Exeter where the general court was sitting. They demanded a release from taxes and an issue of paper money. The lower house wavered, but the senate standing firm, the rebels were routed the next day.

In Vermont demands were made that attorneys be expelled from the courts, that debts be cancelled and threats made that if relief measures were not passed force would be employed. Several hundred men were in the saddle and the courthouse at Rutland was surrounded with armed men led by Thomas Lee. *He had fought with distinction in the Revolution, had risen to the rank of colonel, and on his arrival home had been thrown into prison for debt.* Demands were made of the judges and after a few clashes with troops the rebels were dispersed.[14]

But the most alarming rebellion took place in Massa-

[14]For an exhaustive account of these disturbances and "Shays' Rebellion," which follows, see McMaster, Vol. I, Chap. III, and Fiske, "Critical Period of American History," Chap. V.

The novel of the late Edward Bellamy, entitled "The Duke of Stockbridge," is a romance of Shays' Rebellion and is a faithful portrayal of the social and economic conditions of the time. The vile debtors' prisons are painted with shocking realism and are shown to have a marked influence in goading the workers to rebel against their exploiters.

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chusetts, a revolt that took six months to suppress and one that sobered the ruling classes in their scramble for wealth. The farmers were in dire distress, for their corn rotted on the ground. Money was scarce and they were reduced to the expedient of barter. Thousands signed pledges to resist any court that attempted to take their property and to resist the public sale of goods that had been taken to pay debts. Courts were invaded by large bodies of armed men and forced to suspend. Daniel Shays, an officer in the Continental army, who had fought at Bunker Hill, was chosen leader and the revolt grew to large proportions. The legislature was not in session; there were no funds to pay troops to put down the revolt, but *"a number of wealthy gentlemen" advanced sufficient funds for the purpose.*[15]

The rebellion became so powerful and menacing that it attracted the attention of Congress. That body gave a neat exhibition of "back stairs politics" that has become memorable in the secret history of the United States. Congress feared that the insurgents would capture the national arsenal at Springfield, where there were at least 450 tons of military stores, including bayonets, cannon, powder, shot and shell. The arsenal was in the midst of the discontented population and Secretary of War Knox was directed by Congress to go to Springfield and take such measures as he might deem necessary to protect it. Before he arrived the rebels had already confronted Major General Shepard's troops, *"many of them men of much substance both in wealth and character."*[16] Shays appeared at the time for assembling the court and a conference resulted in an agreement that both sides should disband. Knox was left in the dilemma of protecting the arsenal, which was a difficult task, for the mere knowledge that the state was collecting troops would provoke an immediate attack from the rebels. On the other hand, Governor Bowdoin could not ask for federal forces and Congress could not recruit them openly

[15] McMaster, Vol. I, p. 319.
[16] Article entitled "Shays' Rebellion," "Harper's Magazine," Vol. XXIV, p. 656.

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without warning the rebels. The insurgents, though not active, were masters of the situation.

Knox reported the situation to Congress and the matter was referred to a committee. The committee recommended an increase in the army of 1,340 non-commissioned officers and privates. This would make the total force 2,040. The report, and resolutions accompanying it, was adopted. One would expect that the resolutions would refer to the troubles in Massachusetts, but instead of this *they were filled with startling reports of alleged preparations for war being made by several Indian nations.* This report was intended for popular consumption and a shield to cover the real intentions of Congress.

The following day a secret report was presented by the same committee and adopted by Congress. This one dealt frankly with Shays' rebellion, mentioned the perilous position of the arsenal, stated that "particular circumstances" prevented the governor and council from asking for aid in a formal manner, that troops must be raised, *but that the insurrection must not be mentioned as a reason for raising them and that the Indians would serve as a pretext.*

Congress unanimously adopted a proposal of the treasury department that a requisition of $530,000 in specie be laid in due quotas on the states. "On the credit of this requisition a loan of $500,000, bearing interest at six per cent, might at once be opened." To stimulate subscriptions to the loan Congress *"warned the wealthy men of New England to contribute generously, unless they wished to see the new recruits mutiny for lack of pay and go over to the insurgents."* General Lincoln personally solicited subscriptions from the wealthy men of Boston and other towns, "telling the contributors that it was simply a question of advancing a part of their property in order to save the rest!"

The secret journals of Congress contain the following expression of fear of mutiny and trust in moneyed men: Congress thought that it "would not hazard the perilous

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step of putting arms into the hands of men whose fidelity must in some degree depend on the faithful payment of their wages, had they not the fullest confidence . . . . of the most liberal exertions of the money holders in the state of Massachusetts and the other states in filling the loans authorized by the resolve of this date."[17]

On October 22d, Knox notified Governor Bowdoin of the quota of troops required of Massachusetts and the governor, in transmitting the information to the general court, enlarged on the dangers of an Indian war. But the followers of Shays throughout the state suspected the troops were meant for them and not the Indians. As Gerry wrote to King: "Some of the country members laugh and say the Indian war is only a political one to obtain a standing army." However, the troops were secured by the money advanced by rich men, some of whom enlisted to crush the rebellion. Attacks and counter attacks were made extending over six months before the revolt was crushed. The rebels had no funds or provisions and in the final rout some were frozen to death and others died of hunger and exposure. A price was placed on Shays' head and a large number arrested, of whom 300 were pardoned, 14 sentenced to death, eight of these being pardoned and the remainder reprieved conditionally.[18] As a fitting climax to this historic drama the city of Boston, a few years ago, erected a memorial tablet in memory of Daniel Shays!

Just as in Bacon's Rebellion more than 100 years before, the followers of Shays were charged by the wealthy classes with being communists prompted with the desire to overthrow all authority and property.

These events taught the ruling classes that their supremacy was not secure and that a strong unified government was necessary to prevent the capture of the state govern-

[17] McLaughlin, "The Confederation and the Constitution," p. 165.

[18] For an account of the secret action of Congress see an article by Joseph Parker Warren in the "American Historical Review," Vol. XI. His article is based on the "Secret Journals of Congress" now being published by the United States government. Fiske and McLaughlin also make an incidental reference to this secret juggling.

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ments by those of the debtor class who were still able to qualify for the suffrage. The Continental Congress was nearly dead and there appeared no legal method to secure the changes the ruling classes wanted. But just as the rulers in settlement times did not hesitate at fraud, force and confiscation to secure the natural resources, so the "Fathers" did not hesitate to employ the same means to attain their ends. Besides, they were confident that Shays had "intended, if possible, to seize the capital, take possession of the archives, and proclaim a provisional government."[19] Nor was this the only danger that filled the wealthy "patriots" with dread, "For the progress of the insurrection in the autumn in Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, as well as the troubles in Rhode Island," aroused the fear *"that the insurgents in these states might join forces, and in some way kindle a flame that would run through the land."*[20] Samuel Adams, who had led tar and feather parties in Boston, expressed the vengeance felt by the wealthy when, as president of the Massachusetts senate, he said: "The man who dares to rebel against the laws of a republic ought to suffer death."[21]

All the leading authorities agree that these rebellions, and particularly the one in Massachusetts, had a great influence in driving the "Fathers" to the Constitutional convention which assembled in Philadelphia in 1787. For a long time there had been some dispute between Maryland and Virginia as to the regulation of trade on the Potomac river. In 1785 Washington "became president of a company for extending the navigation of the Potomac and James rivers,"[22] and commissioners of the two states who met in March at Alexandria, adjourned to Mount Vernon, Washington's home, at his request. Washington was not a delegate, but his corporation had pressed the navigation questions on the attention of the two states and he was admitted

[19] 'Harper's Magazine," XXIV, p. 658.
[20] Fiske, "Critical Period of American History," p. 185.
[21] Ibid, p. 184.
[22] Fiske, "Critical Period of American History," p. 213.

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to the conference.[23] Out of this meeting held in response to the corporation's activity, came a series of meetings to consider the commercial interests of the states.

James Madison then "steered" a resolution through the Virginia house which, when reported by the Committee on Commerce, urged all states to send commissioners to a convention in Philadelphia "to provide effectually for the commercial interests of the United States." The convention was endorsed by Congress which, in a resolution adopted February 21, 1787, limited the convention's business to *"the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation."* It is well to remember these instructions and note how the men who accepted them observed them when they took up their work. Article 13 of the Articles provided that no alteration could be made unless *"afterwards confirmed by the legislatures of every state."* We shall note how the "Fathers" observed this provision also.

On assembling in Philadelphia in May the delegates closed the doors of the convention to the outside world and made it a secret body. "It was plain from the first days of the convention that a goodly number of the delegates—and among them many of the most distinguished men—would not limit themselves to a literal interpretation of their powers."[24] Fiske regards this violation of instructions as a "fortunate circumstance,"[25] as indeed it was, for only by such action could the delegates frame the scheme of government which they had in mind. They were there to establish a government that would suppress poor debtors' revolts and enthrone property more securely. Washington had already expressed his panic in a letter to Secretary of War Knox. "There are combustibles," he wrote, "in every state to which a spark might set fire."[26] Violation of instructions was, therefore, preferable to the possibility of debtors' control of the states.

[23] Wilson, "History of the American People," Vol. III, p. 61.
[24] Von Holst, "Constitutional History of the United States," Vol. I, p. 50.
[25] Fiske, "Critical Period of American History," p. 98.
[26] Von Holst, p. 46.

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There were fifty-five delegates present, all of them distinguished for wealth or family. The convention was pledged to secrecy and the rules provided that no member should consult with the outside world or take any record from the official minutes without unanimous consent. For four months the delegates met and discussed, but the people, eagerly waiting to hear what was transpiring, could get no word of what was said or done. In fact, *"just what was said and done in this secret conclave was not revealed until fifty years had passed, and the aged James Madison, the last survivor who sat there, had been gathered to his fathers."*[27]

The reason why the proceedings were not made public till a half century later is apparent. If the debt-ridden masses knew what the speakers had said behind closed doors it is more than probable that drums would have again called them forth to unseat the usurping aristocrats. So fearful were some that the official minutes might become public *that the suggestion was made to destroy them!*[28] But this act of vandalism was averted by placing the proceedings in the hands of Washington, who presided over the convention, "subject to the order of Congress, if ever formed under the constitution."

Madison's "Journal of the Constitutional Convention" is our chief source of information regarding the proceedings, and as he was aggressive in every move to eliminate the masses from any share in controlling the government, we may be sure that he endeavored to place himself and colleagues in as favorable light as possible. He informs his readers that he took notes because of the value he knew they would be to future generations. His "Journal" is filled with speeches expressing contempt for the aspirations of the masses and he reports himself uttering like sentiments.

The first thing that strikes us in his record is the fact that Randolph presented a plan of government that completely abolished the old Confederation and was in plain

[27] Fiske, "Critical Period of American History," p. 229.
[28] Madison, "Journal of the Constitutional Convention," Vol. II, p. 748.

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violation of instructions which limited the delegates to a revision of the Articles only. Attention was repeatedly called to this violation by Patterson of New Jersey, and others. The usual answer to this was to point to Shays' Rebellion and the terror of working class rule. Those having some qualms of conscience were silenced by this dread and the work went on.

The convention was far from being harmonious, as each interest fought hard for its "rights." But one common purpose was expressed by the overwhelming majority of the speakers. This was that the masses should be excluded as much as possible from any control of the government. Some of them spoke as though the workers did not exist at all. Madison, in reviewing the classes to be provided for, could only find the following: "The three principal classes into which our citizens are divisible were the landed, the commercial and the manufacturing."[29] Workingmen are not worth mentioning except as vandals, for later he says: *"In future time, a great majority of the people will not only be without landed but any other sort of property.* These will combine, under the influence of their common situation — in which case the rights of property and the public liberty will not be secure in their hands."[30]

Charles Pinckney, of South Carolina, agrees with Madison that the workers are not worth considering, but enumerates the three worthy classes as the professional, the landed and the commercial.[31] Madison also warns his fellow aristocrats that "There will be, particularly, the distinction between rich and poor. . . . An increase in population will of necessity increase the proportion of those who will labor under all the hardships of life, and secretly sigh for a more equal distribution of its blessings."[32]

Dickenson, of Delaware, also considers property owners "as the best guardians of liberty; and the restriction

[29] Ibid, p. 440.
[30] Ibid, p. 470.
[31] Ibid, Vol. I, p. 234.
[32] Ibid, p. 243.

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of the right (of suffrage) to them as a necessary defense against the dangerous influence of those multitudes without property and without principle (!), with which our country, like all others, will in time abound."[33] Pinckney advises that the qualification for President should be not less than $100,000, "half of that sum for the judges and in like proportion for congressmen."[34] Gouverneur Morris, a descendant of Jacob Leisler, the New York rebel of the century before, is opposed to paying senators. "They will pay themselves, if they can." (What a prophetic vision he had!) "If they cannot, they will be rich, and can do without it." "Of such the second branch ought to exist."[35] (And it does, so rest in peace!)

Oliver Ellsworth, of Connecticut, is a prophet also. He makes the following prediction regarding wage labor and chattel labor: "Let us not intermeddle. *As population increases, poor laborers will be so plenty as to render slaves useless.* Slavery, in time, will not be a speck in our country."[36] Alexander Hamilton declaims "against the vices (mark you!) of democracy. . . . Let one branch of the legislature hold their places for life, or at least, during good behavior. Let the executive, also, be for life."[37]

But it would be tedious to dwell on the frank utterances of these men who spoke their sentiments in secret conclave, well knowing their victims could not hear. During the four months' session only one man mentioned the workers as being worthy of having the franchise. The man who has this distinction is Benjamin Franklin, and his plea was listened to in silence and passed without comment. On August 7th he had listened for hours as speaker after speaker urged control of the government by property holders. He arose from his seat and without any preparation spoke in part as follows:

"It is of great consequence that we should not depress

[33] Ibid, Vol. II, p. 468.
[34] Ibid, p. 494.
[35] Ibid, Vol. I, p. 285.
[36] Ibid, Vol. II, p. 580.
[37] Ibid, Vol. I, pp. 182-183.

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the virtue and public spirit of our common people; of which they displayed a great deal during the war, and which contributed principally to the favorable issue of it. . . . He was persuaded, also, that such a restriction as was proposed would give great uneasiness in the populous states. The sons of a substantial farmer, not being themselves freeholders, would not be pleased at being disfranchised, and there are a great many persons of that description."[38] Three days later he again listened to speeches urging control by property and again made his plea for the workers without property. *Franklin's two speeches are the only pleas made in behalf of popular suffrage in the convention. Not one delegate endorsed his views.*

It would seem that gratitude would have prompted these "Fathers" to give some heed to the claims of the poor who, as Franklin said, "contributed principally to the favorable issue" of the war. But they were lost to all sense of gratitude. Even Wilson, a delegate from Franklin's state who held many popular views, was not willing to assist in battering down the property qualifications that existed in all the states, though eleven years had passed since it was declared that "all men are free and equal." Section 2 of Article 1, as adopted, provided for the automatic exclusion of the mass of workers from the suffrage by accepting the property qualifications of the states. By its adoption "no man could vote for a member of the house who could not vote for a member of the most numerous branch of his state legislature, and all the restrictions imposed on suffrage by the constitutions of the states were thus reimposed by the Constitution of the United States."[39] There were many times when the discussions became heated; many times when the delegates seemed hopelessly divided; but on this one question of allowing the workers to remain excluded from the suffrage, they were unanimous.

The general plan of the delegates consisted of a repudiation of instructions, overthrow of the Articles of Con-

[38] Ibid, Vol. II, p. 471.
[39] McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. III, p. 140.

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federation, and establishment of a stronger government by the aristocracy. This required the secrecy which they provided for. Their scheme of government was to have one legislative department elected direct by the qualified voters, to "inspire confidence" in the scheme, as one speaker expressed it, and a Senate, Executive and Supreme Court removed from popular control and having power to check the Congress. To buttress this by making it almost impossible to amend the constitution was their aim. Prof. J. Allen Smith asserts that *"In 1900 one forty-fourth of the population distributed so as to constitute a majority in the twelve smallest states could defeat any proposed amendment."*[40]

It is interesting to note that the courts now exercising the power to set aside laws enacted by Congress were denied this power even by these aristocrats. Madison and Wilson urged a clause giving this power to the Supreme Court and President as a council of revision *and the suggestion was voted down four times. Yet the courts today exercise this power expressly withheld from them by this negative vote.*

The constitution as finally agreed on was not a unanimous choice. A number refused to sign it for various reasons. Some signed reluctantly; others refused, holding that certain interests were not protected enough or that others received undue consideration. Section 3 of Article 4 contained a fugitive slave clause applying to white slaves as well as negroes. This clause reads as follows:

"No person held to service or labor in one state, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."

This clause shows that the "Fathers" were willing to invade state rights in the function of slave catcher, but not to invade them in the matter of suffrage for the working people. This legalized hunt of whites and blacks, extend-

[40] Smith, 'The Spirit of American Government," p. 46.

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ing over several centuries and embodied in various legal codes, had been so ingrained in the philosophy of the aristocrats who gave us the Constitution that they could not refrain from bequeathing it to the nineteenth century. Of course, their material interests were the urge behind them.

That our view of these men and the character of the government they organized is correct has been shown by the testimony of the framers themselves. Woodrow Wilson endorses this claim. "The government had," he writes, "been originated and organized upon the initiative and primarily in the interest of the mercantile and wealthy classes. Originally conceived as an effort to accommodate commercial disputes between the states, it had been urged to adoption by a minority, under the concerted leadership of able men representing a ruling class."[41]

Bitter criticism of the Constitution came from the dependent classes, though it found much favor with the wealthy. Hamilton, Madison and others feared that their four months of treachery would go for nothing. This in spite of the fact that the Constitution was not to be submitted to the qualified voters, but to state conventions which the aristocracy would have good chances of controlling.

As submitted it was a series of compromises and "bargains." "The fear in which the little states stood of the great secured the compromise giving representation to states. The hatred felt by the slave states for the free caused the second compromise, giving representation to slaves. The jealousy between states agricultural and states commercial brought about the third compromise on the slave trade and commerce."[42]

The convention had violated its instructions; it "had drafted nothing less than a new Constitution—no mere amendment or series of amendments to the Articles of Confederation; a radically new scheme of government and

[41] Wilson, "Division and Reunion," p. 12. "The delegates believed that society existed for the preservation of property."—McLaughlin, "The Confederation and the Constitution," p. 255.

[42] McMaster, "With The Fathers," p. 121. See also Fiske, "Critical Period of American History," pp. 267-268.

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of union—which must stand or fall upon its own merits."[43] Events which followed the submission of the Constitution to the state conventions showed that its partisans had no intention whatever of allowing it to "stand or fall upon its own merits." On the contrary, trickery, bribery, force and deception were employed to secure its adoption, and even then it was not carried by a majority vote. The wealthy classes had an advantage in the restricted franchise, but they added two more weapons to their armory. These were gerrymandering the districts against the poorer classes who could vote, and the publication of "The Federalist," employing in this all the arts of sophistry and deception to win converts for the Constitution. In an illuminating chapter, entitled "The Political Depravity of the Fathers," Professor McMaster writes of the methods used to convince voters of the "merits" of public questions at that time. "A very little study of long forgotten politics," he says, "will suffice to show that in filibustering and gerrymandering, in stealing governorships and legislatures, in using force at the polls, in colonizing and in distributing patronage, . . . *in all the frauds and tricks that go to make up the worst form of politics, the men who founded our state and national governments were always our equals, and often our masters.*"[44]

One or two examples will suffice. The Boston *Gazette* came out with one issue headed in large capitals charging "BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION!!!" It charged that large sums of money were brought from another state, contributed by the wealthy to buy support for the Constitution. Fiske concedes that "there was probably a grain of truth in it,"[45] In Pennsylvania the opposition to the "New Roof," as the constitution was called, was very strong. The convention met to consider it in November, 1787, and two young men, one a reporter for the Pennsylvania *Herald*, volunteered to take down the proceedings. The reporter's

[43]Wilson, "History of the American People," Vol. III, pp. 70-71.
[44]McMaster, "With The Fathers," p. 71.
[45]Fiske, "Critical Period of American History," p. 328.

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account of the debate began to appear in the *Herald* while the other young man solicited subscriptions for a volume of the debates he intended to publish. The debate was apparently going very hard with the Federalists, who supported the Constitution, and the *Herald's* reports were reprinted in other states to their dismay. *The Federalists then bought the paper and suppressed the reports. The other young man was bought and when his book appeared it contained but two speeches delivered by warm supporters of the Constitution!*[46]

"The Federalist," on the other hand, appeared from time to time with well written essays by Madison, Hamilton and Jay, which appeared in the New York *Packet* and other papers. In these essays the schemers changed front. In the secret convention they avow their contempt and fear of the masses and of popular rule. In "The Federalist" they appear as champions and defenders of both and offer the Constitution as the best guarantee of popular liberty. It is amusing to note, in this connection, that these essays are drummed into the heads of guileless youths in American universities.

There were 85 of these essays; 51 written by Hamilton, 29 by Madison and 5 by Jay. It was a scholarly publication and the authors presented the Constitution in the most favorable light. No one could confront the articles in the *Federalist* with the speeches delivered behind closed doors. Yet McMaster suspends all candid judgment when he says "That the work (of the *Federalist*) is a true statement of what the framers of that instrument meant it to be cannot be doubted."[47]

A few extracts from this publication contrasted with the speeches delivered in the "Dark Conclave," as the constitutional convention came to be known, will satisfy any candid reader as to whether these men were honest in their appeals or were only political demagogues. Madison, who in the secret convention said that "the rights of property

[46]McMaster, "With The Fathers," pp. 74-75.
[47]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, p. 484.

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and the public liberty will not be secure in their (the workers') hands," now writes in the *Federalist* as follows:

"The first question that offers itself is, whether the general form and aspect of the government be strictly republican. It is evident that no other form would be reconcilable with the genius of the people of America; with the principles of the Revolution; or with the honorable (!) determination which animates every votary of freedom (!!) to rest all our political experiments on the capacity of mankind for self-government."[48] The answer to his own enquiry is that the constitution is everything that the "votaries of freedom" could wish to expect, and he elaborates on this assertion in 29 essays, drawing on the experience and history of ancient and modern republics, to convince his readers. The question is, was *Madison* lying in the *Federalist* or in the secret convention at Philadelphia?

Hamilton, who in the convention urged that the Senate and President be elected for life and who repeatedly avowed his contempt for the "vices of democracy," now sends forth this appeal: "The fabric of American empire ought to rest on the solid basis of the consent of the people. The streams of national power ought to flow immediately from that pure original fountain of all legitimate authority!"[49] Was Hamilton a convert to "vices" he hated or was he still the frank monarchist of the "Dark Conclave?"

Later on he becomes virtuously indignant at the charges made that the convention was a conspiracy and that he and others were not presenting their honest views. In the closing number of the *Federalist* he writes: "The charge of a conspiracy against the liberties of the people, which has been indiscriminately brought against the advocates of the plan, has something in it too wanton and too malignant not to excite the indignation of every man who feels in his own bosom a refutation (!) of the calumny. . . . And the unwarrantable concealments (!!) and misrepresentations (!!!) which have been in various ways prac-

[48] The Federalist, No. 38.
[49] The Federalist, No. 44.

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ticed to keep the truth (!!!!) from the public eye have been of a nature to demand the reprobation of all honest men."[50]

To this sophistry we may reply in the cutting words of Professor Smith: "The evidence now accessible to students of the American Constitution proves that the charges of 'concealments and misrepresentations' made with this show of righteous indignation against the opponents of the Constitution *might have justly been made against Hamilton himself. But knowing that the views expressed in the Federal Convention were not public property, he could safely give to the press this 'refutation of the calumny.'*"[51]

However, the scholarly attainments of the pleaders and the ingenious arguments which they employed in defense of the Constitution; the advantage which they possessed in the fact that the mass of the workers had no vote; together with the employment of craft and coercion, all these had their effect in carrying the day for the usurping minority.

Opponents of the document had a powerful argument in pointing out the important fact that the "votaries of freedom" had omitted any provisions for freedom of the press, freedom of speech and assemblage, the right of petition, and the right of trial by jury. This had such effect that the Federalists made it known that if the Constitution was adopted the First Congress would submit amendments including these popular guarantees. This became also a powerful bid for support. The Federalists were finally able to carry the Constitution by small majorities in the state conventions. But even this was only a partial victory, for only six states adopted it without any qualifications, while the remaining seven in adopting it recommended amendments ranging from four by South Carolina to thirty-two by New York.

It was adopted by a minority vote. There are amundant authorities who affirm this judgment. Owing to the restrictions placed on the suffrage only those possessing property had a voice in choosing delegates to the state conven-

[50]The Federalist, No. 85.
[51]Smith, "The Spirit of American Government," pp. 77-78.

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tions that considered the instrument. McMaster affirms that many farmers' sons, wandering teachers and lawyers beginning practice were fortunate if they could vote at the age of twenty-eight. "Of the mass of unskilled laborers—the men who dug ditches, carried loads, or in harvest time helped the farmer gather in his hay and grain—it is safe to say that very few, if any, ever in the course of their lives cast a vote."[52] In fact, "*There were probably not more than* 120,000 *men who had the right to vote out of all the four million inhabitants enumerated in the first census* (1790)"[53].

The vote cast in the states shows the division between the wealthy class and those of moderate means; the former favoring, the latter opposing the Constitution. "All who possessed estates, who were engaged in traffic, or held any of the final settlements and depreciation certfiicates, felt safe."[54] On the other hand, the Constitution "was opposed by the men who lived remote from the centers of population and the stronger currents of trade, . . . by men who were more likely to be debtors than to be creditors."[55]

Fisher, speaking of Massachusetts, asserts that out of every four or five adult males only one was a freeman; "and this disfranchised majority, which included from three-fourths to four-fifths of the able-bodied men of the colony, had no more part or lot in the government than the women and children."[56] Professor Francis Norton Thorpe also states that the "freemen of America a century ago comprised about one-fifteenth of the whole population."[57]

The struggle over the Constitution developed two clearly marked divisions; one comprising the Federalists who supported it, and one of the Anti-Federalists who opposed it. With one exception the former party in all the states was made up of the various sections of the ruling class, while the latter was composed of the poor classes who

[52]McMaster, "With The Fathers," pp. 163-164.
[53]Wilson, "History of the American People," Vol. III, pp. 120-121.
[54]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. I, p. 399.
[55]Wilson, "History of the American People," Vol. III, pp. 79-80. See also his map showing clearly the distribution of the vote along these lines.
[56]Fisher, "Men, Women and Manners in Colonial Times," Vol. I, p. 132.
[57]Thorpe, "Magazine of American History," Vol. XVIII, p. 131.

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managed to qualify for the suffrage.[58] The opposition to the Constitution was located in those sections where hard and painful, but useful toil was the chief distinction of their inhabitants. It included the "debtor and paper money region and one peculiarly sensitive to taxation. It included factious Rhode Island, the Shays' region in Massachusetts and the center of a similar movement in New Hampshire." It found its most ardent supporters in the commercial centers of all the colonies; "the areas of intercourse and wealth carried the Constitution."[59]

Henry Knox wrote to Washington in 1788 that in Massachusetts the "property and ability" of the state favored the Constitution and opposed to it were Shays' sympathizers, constituting four-fifths of the opposition. Madison mentions eighteen or twenty delegates in the Massachusetts convention who were in Shays' army and were opposed to the Constitution."[60]

In Rhode Island, "as in Massachusetts, the wealthy and commercial classes united to favor the Constitution, as opposed to the interior agricultural class who believed among other things, in paper money issues.[61] Here the debtor class predominated and opposition to the Constitution made it the last state to come into the union. New Jersey desired the regulation of commerce to be assumed by the federal government and fretted under the imposts levied by New York and Pennsylvania. What opposition prevailed came from the debtor and paper money regions.[62] In Connecticut the opposition was very weak, but came from sections of the state that contained the debtor classes and those who sympathized with Shays' Rebellion.[63] In Pennsylvania "The

[58] I am indebted to the librarian of the University of Wisconsin for the privilege of consulting Orrin Grant Libby's invaluable monograph, "The Geographical Distribution of the Vote of the Thirteen States on the Federal Constitution, 1787-8." His examination of the records of the vote in the conventions on the Constitution is exhaustive and generally conceded as authoritative. My account of the vote in the states is a summary of Mr. Libby's conclusions.

[59] Libby, pp. 46-49.

[60] Ibid, p. 13.

[61] Ibid, p. 17.

[62] Ibid, p. 61.

[63] Ibid, pp. 57-58.

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paper money and debt factions of 1786 quite largely joined the Anti-Federalists of 1788."[64]

Eighty per cent of tidewater Virginia, containing the monied and commercial interests, supported the Constitution. The interior, composed of small farmers, voted 74 per cent against. The West Virginia district, which lay in the Shenandoah Valley with a thickly settled and important commercial interest, voted 97 per cent for while the back country of Kentucky voted 90 per cent against.[65]

Georgia gave a speedy endorsement to the Constitution because of its exposed situation as the Southern frontier state. A strong government was regarded as necessary to cope with the Indians on the border and to assist in reclaiming fugitive slaves who continually crossed the Spanish line and escaped.[66] The six towns represented in the North Carolina convention were all Federal but one, and three of them belonged to counties otherwise Anti-Federal. Here as in the other states the commercial sections were generally Federal strongholds while the interior was Anti-Federal.[67]

South Carolina presented the usual division between the wealthy commercial district along the coast—particularly the city of Charleston—and the back country of farmers and frontiersmen. Long before the Revolution the indolent aristocracy of this city incurred the antagonism of the democracy of the interior which found expression in the struggle over the Constitution. The coast region stood 88 per cent for the Constitution, the middle region being almost evenly divided, while the upper region stood 80 per cent against it.[68]

New York furnishes the one exception to this general division of the vote. The interior counties of this state were opposed to the Constitution, although the two cities of Albany and Hudson favored it but did not send delegates to the state convention. New York City and county were strongly Federal but the state as a whole was strongly Anti-

[64]Ibid, p. 64.
[65]Ibid, pp. 34-35.
[66]Ibid, p. 45.
[67]Ibid, pp. 41-42.
[68]Ibid, pp. 43-44.

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Federal owing to the preponderance of power held by the land kings along the banks of the Hudson and the Mohawk. This landed aristocracy controlled the government, collected duties on goods going to other states through New York ports, and would have to surrender this privilege if the state entered the union. Its ruling classes believed that New York could stand alone as an independent state and in opposing the Constitution were following what appeared to be their material interests. This Anti-Federal aristocracy constitutes the one exception to the general truth that the wealthy classes urged and fought for the Constitution.[69]

This brief survey of the vote on the Constitution clearly shows the interests opposing and the interests favoring it. It is also clear that the Constitutional Convention was a reactionary body and the Constitution a new charter making more secure the position of the ruling classes of that day. Both constituted a counter-revolution against poor debtors driven mad by the treatment they received after fighting the battles of the property-owning classes in the war.

[69]Ibid, Chap. I. See also McLaughlin, "The Confederation and the Constitution," p. 306. "Thus . . . the mercantile interests became a potent factor in the conservative counter-revolution that led to the establishment of the United States Constitution."—Schlesinger, "The Colonial Merchants and the American Revolution, 1763-1776," p. 606.

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Chapter IX

Awakening of Labor, 1804-1860

We have traced the development of the working-class over three centuries and it remains for us to consider the development which followed the adoption of the Constitution. The new government placed the privileged classes firmly in the saddle and the new century brought with it a desertion of the sea-coast states that has continued down to recent times. The more daring moved out into the wilderness of Tennessee or drifted down the Ohio to Kentucky to escape "from a barren country loaded with taxes and impoverished with debts," as one pioneer wrote from the Falls of the Ohio in 1785.[1] The advance guard with rifle and powder horn pushed their way along the courses of rivers, building blockhouses, clearing the forests for cultivation, and leaving pools of settlers behind to grow into villages, towns and cities.

John Bradbury, an English traveler, noticed what many later travelers observed, that emigrants lacking the stamina for enduring the hardships of clearing the wilderness always found opportunity for buying out the backwoodsman's clearing. The latter found the frontier with its hardships, adventure and primitive freedom more attractive than the civilization creeping at his heels. The clearing which he sold generally consisted of a log house, a small orchard, and from ten to forty acres enclosed and partly cleared.[2] It is this fleeing host of workers across a continent that constitutes a phase of American history that is unknown to any other nation. The moving frontier absorbed the European or the worker of the Atlantic Coast states and transformed him into a communist, a barbarian, a hunter or a savage accord-

[1]McLaughlin, "The Confederation and the Constitution," p. 95.

[2]Bradbury, "Travels in the Interior of America in the Years 1809, 1810 and 1811," p. 291.

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ing to the place he occupied in the advancing line. If it was the farthest outpost jetting into the wilderness, he was likely to be transformed into something akin to the savage in his mode of life. If he was a recruit farther back in the line of advance he may have formed one of the groups of communist settlers who, through mutual aid, raised each other's log huts, cleared each other's land, husked corn in common and largely lived a communist life.

Of the transformations that the environment of the frontier wrought in the habits, customs and morals of civilized man, Prof. Turner says:

"The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization, and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him. Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails."[3]

As the development of the child, from conception to birth, repeats the history of living things from the lowest forms of life to man, so this westward migration of the people reproduced much of the social history of mankind from savagery to modern capitalism.

"The advance guard of hunters, trappers, fishermen, scouts and Indian fighters reproduced with remarkable fidelity the social stage of savagery. They lived in rude shelters built of logs or of prairie sod, found their food and clothing by the chase, gathered around personal leaders, were often lawless, brutal and quarrelsome, though more frequently they displayed the even more characteristically

[3]F. J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," International Socialist Review, December, 1905.

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savage traits of taciturn silence and fatalistic courage. . . ."[4] Following these came the first settlers, who stopped long enough to make the first clearings, only to move on and repeat this experience as the next wave of approaching population reached them. They combined mutual assistance in farming and hut-building, with hunting and fishing, to maintain existence. Following them came the nomadic stage of herdsmen and cowboys, crossing the continent in its order wherever the land permitted. Following this stage came the first permanent settlements, bringing with them the infant phases of capitalism which were to develop into the hideous cities with their dirt, disease, slums, and merciless robbery of the workers.[5]

The accounts of early western travelers are filled with interesting descriptions of this moving horde of people and the life they lived in each stage. André Michaux, a French traveler, in 1793-96, mentions the almost complete reversion of his countrymen to savagery at the French settlement of Kaskaskia, Illinois. Most of the settlers were clothed like savages and their huts were in ruins. "They wear no breeches but pass between their thighs a piece of cloth . . . which is kept in place before and behind above the hips by a belt."[6] In the rough, border life of these people gambling and fighting are prominent vices. Hands, teeth, knees, head and feet are used in fighting. The old Virginia custom of "gouging" each other's eyes out by the skillful use of thumb and finger is a common practice. Another traveler in 1807-09 observes that "the backwoodsmen, as the first emigrants from the eastward of the Allegheny mountains are called, are very similar in their habits and manners to the aborigines, only perhaps more prodigal and more careless of life. . . . Their cabins are not better than wigwams."[7]

Money cannot purchase necessary help. An employing class with a well-stocked "labor market" was to come

[4]Simons, "Social Forces in American History," Chap. XII.
[5]Ibid.
[6]Andre Michaux's Travels: "Early Western Travels," Vol. III, p. 70.
[7]Cuming's Tour, "Early Western Travels," Vol. IV, p. 137.

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later. Mutual aid is the rule. On an appointed day the neighbors assemble and divide into parties to each of which is assigned a duty. Bradbury often witnessed a cabin raising. "One party," he writes, "cuts down the trees, another lops and cuts them to proper length, a third is furnished with horses and oxen, and drags them to the spot designed for the site of the house; another party is employed in making shingles to cover the roof, and at night all the materials are ready upon the spot; and on the night of the next day, he and his family sleep in their new habitation."[8] This communal help is known as a "frolic." There are frolics to reap the wheat, to clear the woods and hew logs into lengths, and for picking cotton. There are also sewing and quilting frolics for making clothing in the households.[9] The frontier is the best example of the influence of environment in transforming character, shaping institutions, forming habits and customs and determining the type of society in general.

Back in the sea-coast states the poverty of the masses was pressing this mass of people through the wilderness by sending a constant stream of recruits into the rear ranks. Early in the last century Bradbury observed many farms abandoned in Virginia. He was informed that in 18 months 15,000 wagons containing emigrants passed one New York bridge to the West. Wagoners carry beds, cooking utensils and food. Many wander afoot and some stop at taverns if able to pay.[10] Another traveler in Pennsylvania about the same time mentions a "singular party of travelers—a man with his wife and ten children. The eldest of the progeny had the youngest tied on his back; and the father pushed a wheelbarrow, containing the movables of the family." They are leaving New Jersey and their destination is Ohio. Farther on a young woman is passed, "carrying a sucking child in her arms, and leading a very little one by the

[8] Bradbury, "Travels," p. 293.
[9] Wood's "English Prairie," Ear. West. Trav., Vol. X, p. 300.
[10] Bradbury, "Travels," pp. 310-17.

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hand."[11] Arriving at Pittsburg or Wheeling the emigrants float down the Ohio in flat-bottomed "arks," carrying three or four families who locate close to a town or disappear in the wilderness. At Pittsburg sharks are waiting to sell cheap, defective barks that may sink when striking obstructions and endanger the lives of the occupants.[12]

In 1811 one Pennsylvania town witnessed the passing of 236 wagons in one month bound for Ohio. By 1814 the poor were deserting the East in such numbers as to arouse fears that it would be depopulated. Residents of New York State affirmed that they had never seen such a migration westward. The population of Ohio, Indiana and Kentucky increased rapidly, while Virginia seriously thought of legislation to check its emigration. Villages on the Ohio that were scarcely more than a cluster of huts grew into flourishing towns within a few years. One family of eight walked from Maine to Pennsylvania dragging children and goods in a handcart. By 1817 some cities of the East ceased to grow, so great was the desertion of the seaboard states by the poor.[13]

In 1820 Flint writes of having seen upwards of 1,500 men out of work during the previous eleven months. Newspapers and private letters agree that wages at Philadelphia and at other points had decreased to twenty cents per day and board. Great numbers are encamped in open fields near Baltimore. Wages are low along the Ohio and paid in depreciated paper. Some boarding houses refuse it and the laborers fire a decayed log and sleep by it at night. A Cincinnati paper advertised a place for receiving old clothes for the poor and cast-off shoes for children. Contracts are let in the western country for boarding the poor who are farmed out to employers.[14] Poverty filled the debtors'

[11]Flint, "Letters from America," Ear. West. Trav., Vol. IX, p. 72. See also Calhoun, "Social History of the American Family," II, VIII.
[12]Ibid, p. 94.
[13]McMaster, "History of the People of the United States," Vol. IV, pp. 388-9. By 1821 the official classes were so alarmed by the increase of pauperism and crime that some demanded a return to the whipping post, the pillory and gallows. The treadmill was introduced in many prisons and was used for years as a "correction" for poverty.—Ibid, pp. 546-7.
[14]Flint, "Letters from America," pp. 226-9.

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prisons and one congressman, in 1829, protests against the spectacle of a constable selling a woman at public auction for debt under the authority of Congress.[15]

By 1833 thousands were leaving New England and following a route bordering the lakes. The revolutions of 1848 in Europe sent tens of thousands and was further stimulated by transportation agencies interested in immigration. The terrible famine in Ireland where thousands dropped of hunger in the streets and fields brought fleeing Irishmen in droves.[16] In 1843 hundreds were gathered at the Missouri ferries and by 1847 between four and five thousand were crossing.[17] The emigrants of 1849 were similar to the masses who made their way across the Alleghenies in the early part of the country, some on foot carrying babies in their arms and barefooted children trudging behind, while others made their way in the prairie schooner. Often the sufferings of the emigrants were greater than the westward movement had ever experienced.[18]

While the workers were deserting the sea-coast states and seeking economic independence, a peculiar by-product of colonial exploitation had already formed in the mountain regions of the South. The mountain whites inhabited the Appalachian chain from western Virginia to northern Alabama. Crowded back by the movement of population, they wandered into remote regions and became isolated from the outside world. Their development became arrested at a period identical with the colonial era; their manners, customs, songs and speech belong to this period. Living in rude huts, having large families, using the simple implements of the barbarian beyond the frontier, they vegetated in ignorance of the great current of progress that was sweeping beyond them.[19]

The life of the mountain whites is so like the life of the people of the seventeenth century that an observer

[15] McMaster, "History," Vol. V, pp. 224-5.
[16] McMaster, "History," Vol. VII, pp. 222-3.
[17] Paxon, "The Last American Frontier," p. 76.
[18] Ibid, pp. 113-4.
[19] McMaster, "History," Vol. VII, pp. 236-7.

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has given them the name of "Our contemporary ancestors."[20] In some parts the spinning wheel is still in use and there are instances of a sheep trotting about in the early morning and a mountaineer wearing its pelt at night, it having been sheared, spun, woven, dyed, cut, made and fitted in that one day. They still sing the old Elizabethan ballads which are handed down from grandmother to child.[21] The lowest layers live in rude cabins with scanty supplies of food. Most of them are illiterate and many have negro or Indian blood in their veins. A mixture of corn meal, salt and water baked on hot coals with what game they shoot or trap make up their living. Ignorant preachers shout the terrors of hell-fire till sinners "get religion," while the men chew enormous quantities of tobacco and the women "dip snuff." Bathing is a lost art and a garment once put on stays there until it is worn out. They are proud and generous and share their simple comforts with strangers with the pomp of princes.

The lowland whites lie east of this region and are largely composed of descendants of the poorer classes and released servants of earlier days. These "poor whites" still form a large element in the population of the Southern states. Twenty years before the Civil War Frances Anne Kemble observed them in Georgia. "They are hardly protected," she writes, "from the weather by the rude shelters they frame for themselves in the midst of these dreary woods. Their food is chiefly supplied by shooting the wild fowl and venison, and stealing from the cultivated patches of the plantations nearest at hand. Their clothes hang about them in filthy tatters, and the combined squalor and fierceness of their appearance is really frightful."[22] They were and are a legitimate product of the system of slave labor which made the performance of useful labor by white men a disgrace. They believe themselves a part of the ruling whites and share the latter's hatred of

[20] Hart, "The Southern South," p. 30.
[21] Ibid, pp. 30-32.
[22] Kemble, "Journal of a Residence on a Georgian Plantation in 1838-1839," p. 76.

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the "nigger." The ruling class fosters this hatred of the blacks by the poor whites and rules and robs both.

The ruling and poor whites regarded labor as a distinct function of the negro, while the poor white often sunk to depths of poverty, as a result of his refusal to work, that the negro never knew. Flint observed a curious example of this in 1818. "Certain kinds of labor," he writes, "are despised as being the work of slaves. Shoe blacking and, in some instances, family manufactures, are of this class of labors; and it is thus that in some of the small towns on the north side of the Ohio, the mechanic and laborer are to be seen drawing water at the wells; their wives and daughters not condescending to services that are looked upon to be opprobrious. It was for the same reason that, on one occasion, some paupers in a poorhouse at Cincinnati refused to carry water for their own use."[23] The hatred borne the negro in the South by the white workers has been intensified by the fact that the Civil War placed blacks and whites in the same labor market and the white now insists on the privilege of being exploited. To be thrust into the same market and be compelled to serve the white masters violates the old conception that work belongs exclusively to the blacks.[24]

The poor whites of the lowlands are known as "Tar Heels" in North Carolina, "Sand Hillers" in South Carolina, "Crackers" in Georgia, "Clay Eaters," in Alabama, "Red Necks" in Arkansas, "Hill Billies" in Mississippi, and "Mean Whites," "White Trash" and "No 'Count" everywhere.[25] They are held in contempt by the politicians and ruling whites, who stimulate their hatred of the negro in order to rule both.

While the moving population was sending the workers westward in quest of better conditions those left in the cities were engaging in the struggle for the "inalienable rights" that the Declaration proclaimed and the Constitutional Con-

[23] Flint, "Letters from America," Ear. West, Trav., Vol. IX, p. 218.
[24] Baker, "Following the Color Line," p. 85.
[25] Hart, "The Southern South," p. 38.

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vention denied. A study of the demands made by the workers at this time shows that they were always advancing proposals and outlining plans for every popular liberty that has come down to us. The issues that confronted the workers were public education, imprisonment for debt, the militia system, mechanics' liens, equal taxation, cheaper legal procedure, abolition of conspiracy laws against labor organizations, child labor and opposition to chartered banks and monopolies.

The workers were often cheated out of their scanty wages by absconding contractors or paid in worthless script or depreciated money. The hours of labor were from daylight till dark; the debtors' prisons still swallowed thousands; what few free schools existed carried with them the stigma of pauperism for the worker's child; the compulsory militia system, permitting the rich to escape service by paying a small fine, left the worker no choice between service and imprisonment.[26] Labor organizations were prosecuted under old English laws as conspiracies; the children of the poor were being drawn into the factories and property qualifications excluded the mass of workers from voting. All this driftwood floating down from the past had to be removed by the working class and the workers set about the task before them.

Not only was the press of that day opposed to any changes but the politicians were either indifferent or hostile, while employers' associations were formed to oppose the workers' demands.[27] The workers defended their general position and demands with a skill and logic that is hardly equalled by the unions today and some passages in their official utterances show that they perceived the character of capitalist society as a system that enabled a few to live off of unpaid labor. As early as 1828 the Mechanics Union of Philadelphia declared in its preamble: "Do not all

[26]Documentary History of American Industrial Society, Vol. V, Introduction.

[27]See resolutions adopted by master carpenters in Philadelphia, 1827, Ibid, pp. 81-82.

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the streams of wealth which flow in every direction and are emptied into and absorbed by the coffers of the unproductive, exclusively take their rise in the bones, marrow, and muscles of the industrious classes? In return for which, exclusive of a bare subsistence, . . . they receive not a thing!"[28]

One of the first and foremost demands was for the public school and free education. As an institution the common school had no existence and agitation for it met the vigorous opposition of the ruling classes. From 1809 to 1835 the laws of Pennsylvania provided that only those who took oath that they could not send their children to private pay schools should be allowed to send them to the public schools. The public schools were regarded as pauper institutions, a stigma of shame being attached to children who attended them. In Delaware and Maryland the schools were little better and were frequently taught by redemptioners and indentured servants. Schools were often in the hands of ignorant, brutal and immoral teachers and school funds were often embezzled or neglected. The workers attacked the schools and by 1834 there were 200,000 children out of school in Pennsylvania. In September of that year the State provided for tax-supported schools and three months later petitions for repeal of the act were received from 38 counties out of 51 and only a hard struggle saved the bill.[29]

A Workingmen's Committee of Philadelphia in 1829 drew a model outline for a system of free education that would be a credit to experienced educators.[30] In all the working class journals of that time and for many years after free education and the public school are prominent demands. The opposition to them read like the anti-Socialist arguments of today. The National Gazette, of Philadelphia, in a number of editorials in 1830, ridiculed the public school as an impractical dream and as class legislation. This paper regarded it as "incompatible with the very organization and

[28] Doc. Hist. Vol. V, p. 85.
[29] McMaster, "History," Vol. V, pp. 361-2; Vol. VII, pp. 160-1.
[30] Doc. Hart. Vol. V, pp. 94-107.

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being of civil society." It affirms that the public school would place a premium on idleness. "A scheme of universal equal education . . . could not be used with any degree of equality of profit, unless the dispositions and circumstances of parents and children were nearly the same; to accomplish which phenomenon, in a nation of many millions, engaged in a great variety of pursuits, would be beyond human power."[31] Thus spoke the "educated" classes in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The public school as we know it came in time and it is only in recent years that historians concede that it is a monument to the genius and struggles of the workers during the first half-century of the republic.

By 1825 the development of industry called into existence a mass of trades unknown to the colonial period. Mill hands, mechanics, engineers, printers, increased with the economic changes so that a definite class of wage workers, marked by feelings, interests, habits and life that are typical of capitalist production, was forming. This was also the formative period of working class organizations and labor unions were organized in many of the larger cities.[32] The workers at this period were fortunate to receive 75c. for 12 hours' work. Many were glad to work for "37c and even for 25c a day in winter who in spring and summer could earn 62½c or perhaps 87½ by toiling 14 hours." These wages drove children to beg or steal; girls crowded houses of shame to such an extent that such houses were pulled down in a number of cities.[33] In the states bordering the Ohio wages were higher owing to the scarcity of population.[34]

The old grievances persisted in the centers of population. In 1827 the Prison Discipline Society at Boston mentions one lunatic incarcerated in a cell for nine years with a wreath of rags around his body. Filthy straw was his bed while bench and chair were unknown. Lunatics

[31] Doc. Hist. Vol. V, pp. 107-112. See also Commons and Associates, "History of Labor in the United States," I, VI.
[32] McMaster, "History," Vol. V, pp. 84-85.
[33] Ibid, pp. 121-2.
[34] Hulme's "Journal," Ear. West. Trav. Vol. X, p. 75.

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were neglected, caged in small, dark cells, while one stuffed cracks with hay to keep out the cold. Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Washington and other cities presented similar conditions and were often described as places of filth, vice and immorality.

Thirty years of the new century passed before any modification of the penal codes in the states took place. Cropping the ears, the use of branding irons, lashing offenders, exposure in the stocks and imprisonment for debt were only slightly modified. By 1833 it was estimated that 75,000 debtors were jailed each year; 10,000 were in New York; 7,000 in Pennsylvania, and 3,000 each in Massachusetts and Maryland. Thirty-two prisons in 1830 report 2,841 debtors imprisoned for sums less than $20.[35]

It is necessary to go back to the opening years of the century in tracing other phases of the period of struggle. Attempts to organize and improve the conditions under which the workers had labored for centuries provoked retaliation from the master employers. The first struggle of the working class was to win the right to struggle—the right to organize unmolested and acquire by their own efforts some measure of freedom which the Revolution denied them.

The first section of the labor army to feel the blows of the "votaries of freedom" was the sailors in New York, in 1802. At this period the hours of labor were generally from sunrise to sunset. At Albany the wages were forty cents per day and in Pennsylvania six dollars per month in summer and five in winter. The average wages were about $65 per year, including board. Out of this sum the workers were expected to feed and clothe their families. The sailors at New York who were receiving $10 per month struck for fourteen. They marched through the city persuading others to join them, when the constables were sent in pursuit, broke the strike, and jailed the leader.[36] So ended the first strike in America.

[35] McMaster, "History," Vol. VI, pp. 97-99.
[36] McMaster, "History," Vol. II, pp. 617-18.

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The next struggle was at Philadelphia, in 1806, where the cordwainers were indicted for conspiracy for attempting to raise their wages. It was the first of many trials of this kind extending over a period of forty years, and it is interesting to note that the prosecutions were usually based on the *common law of England which included the bloody legislation against the disinherited mentioned in our first chapter.*

The cordwainers were boot and shoemakers and the evidence brought out in the trial showed they had organized to protect themselves against the master employers who had organized to advance their common interests. Organizations of the masters, however, were never indicted for conspiracy. In this first conspiracy case the jury was composed almost entirely of small business men and shopkeepers as follows: three grocers, two innkeepers, a merchant, a tobacconist, a tavern-keeper, a hatter, a bottler, a watchmaker and a "taylor." *A shoemaker was drawn as one of the jurors and rejected because of his occupation.* The strikers were charged with unlawfully assembling to "unjustly and corruptly conspire, combine, confederate and agree together that none of them, the said conspirators, . . . would work for any master . . . who would employ any artificer, workman or journeyman . . . who should thereafter infringe or break" the unlawful rules and orders of the boot and shoemakers.

The most important testimony presented by the prosecution was that given by a member who secretly scabbed on the union while serving on the strike committee.

A master employer is called to the witness stand. "Have the masters a society?" he is asked. Not at all. ". . . they may sometimes meet together, but they keep no accounts of their proceedings, they may meet as people meet before an election, to consult on the affairs of the moment, but nothing regular." Is there anything more innocent than this? Nothing more harmless. Their counsel argue that the masters are prompted by patriotic motives and regard for the public weal in prosecuting this unlawful conspiracy.

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The "public" sits in the jury box as "impartial" judges of the evidence.

Counsel for the defense riddles the patriotic claims of the prosecution. "We are told that this prosecution is brought forward from public motives," but "when you see a formidable band of masters attending on the trial of this cause; . . . and when you see further, that it is not taken up by any of their customers, it will require strong arguments to convince you it is done out of pure patriotic motives." He goes to the heart of the matter. "It is nothing more or less than this," he exclaims, "whether the wealthy master shoemakers . . . shall charge you and me what price they please for our boots and shoes, and at the same time have the privilege of fixing the wages of the poor journeymen they happen to employ." This sounds like a counter-charge of conspiracy, but its logic does not appeal to the "public." The verdict reads: *"We find the defendants guilty of a combination to raise their wages."* They are fined eight dollars each with costs of the suit and are committed till paid.[37] The convicted men opened a boot and shoe warehouse appealing to "public liberality to save themselves and families from abject poverty."[38]

In short, *the Revolution had simply bequeathed to the workers, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the barbarous conspiracy code of England enacted a century or two before!* And these prosecutions for conspiracy continued in Pennsylvania, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, and other states, and not till the first half of the century had passed into history did the workers establish the labor union as a legal institution of their class.[39]

At least twenty-four organizations of workingmen were organized from 1800 to 1810, including masons, bricklay-

[37] See "A Documentary History of American Industrial Society," Vol. III, for a stenographic report of the trial.

[38] McMaster, "Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," p. 58.

[39] See "Documentary History of American Industrial Society," Vols. III, IV and Supplement to Vol. IV for proceedings of numerous conspiracy trials from 1806 to 1842.

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ers, shipwrights, printers, cordwainers and others.[40] These steadily increased in spite of prosecutions for conspiracy and the first quarter of the century had hardly passed until the workers were planning to take political action to abolish the grievances already mentioned. The federal and state governments were carefully nursing manufactures with tariffs, bounties, subsidies, land grants and other forms of legislation. The experiment of Samuel Slater in Rhode Island with machinery and child labor was soon followed in other states. The period between 1815 and 1830 witnessed a general employment of women and children in the factories and Hamilton's wish to exploit them was realized.

By 1831 some of the factories became torture chambers similar to those that gave British capitalists their blood-stained fortunes some decades before. "Women and children in the factories . . ." says one writer, "were frequently beaten with cowhides and otherwise maltreated. An instance was shown of a deaf and dumb boy receiving a hundred lashes from his neck to his feet; and another of the breaking of the leg of an eleven-year-old girl by a club thrown at her by an employer."[41]

Massachusetts "democracy," with its old trade-mark, also appears with the rise of the factory system. Corporation boarding houses and corporation churches became adjuncts to the factories and employes could only get work by signing contracts that rigidly bound them to the sweaters of labor. The Lowell Manufacturing Company's rules, 1830-1840, provided that all employes must board at the company house and observe its minute regulations; all must go to church and must work twelve months unless two weeks' notice of intention to quit is given. Other detail regulations are considered part of the contract.

During the same period the Cocheo Manufacturing Company, at Dover, New Hampshire, has contracts with its "hands" by which the latter agree not to join any labor

[40] McMaster, "History," Vol. III, p. 511.
[41] W. J. Ghent, in "The Forum," August, 1901.

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organization and if they do they forfeit the wages due them; they agree to accept such wages "as the company may see fit to pay"; they are subject to fines; two cents per week are deducted for a sick fund; they agree not to leave the employ of the company without giving two weeks' notice, and if they do they forfeit two weeks' pay, and if discharged they are not entitled to their wages until two weeks after discharge.[42] The employes of these factories were nearly all girls. Corporation paternalism became rampant. The girls not only slept in company houses, but patronized company stores. Some corporations maintained churches, paid the preacher's salary, collected pew rents from the operatives, and held out fixed sums from their wages for the welfare of their souls! Six and eight girls frequently occupied the same bed chamber and the hours of labor varied from twelve in summer to fourteen in winter.[43]

All these grievances required political action to abolish them and by 1829 the Workingmen's party of New York was organized and by the following year it was widespread throughout the state. Robert Dale Owen and Frances Wright, or "Fanny" Wright as she was popularly known, both took up the cause of the workers. Owen had already attacked the capitalist order of things, including in his indictment religion and marriage resting on a property basis. A series of debates between Owen and Alexander Campbell in Cincinnati, in April, 1829, had made the former's views widely known.[44] This gave the opposition its opportunity. The press that yawped the praises of the dominant class now served the latter well. The new party became the "Infidel Ticket"; the "rights of property, religion and order" were in danger; the "mob" threatened the foundations of society. In short, it was a rehash of the panic-stricken cry of the plunderers during Bacon's Rebellion;

[42] Abbott, "Women in Industry," Appendices II and III.
[43] Ibid, Chap. VII; Fox, "Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York," Chap. X; Calhoun, "Social History of the American Family," Chap. IX.
[44] "The Evidences of Christianity; A Debate," Cincinnati, 1852.

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in 1676, Shays' Rebellion following the Revolution, and the same is heard today, with some variations, hurled against the modern Socialist movement.

The polls, by law, were open for three days and the result of the first day's poll indicated a triumph for the ticket. The forces of "law, order and religion" rallied, following denunciations by the press, and only one candidate of the workers was elected and the press urged the legislature to unseat him. Some of the unions in Philadelphia and New York were intimidated by the cry against Fanny Wright and repudiated her doctrines and those of Owen.[45]

The platform of these workingmen shows that they understood the character of their wrongs and their historical origin. They declare capitalist society to be "constructed radically wrong" and point out that thousands are in "deep distress and poverty, dependent upon a few among us for their daily subsistence" who are made "enormously rich." A "civil revolution" at the ballot box is urged until some degree of equality is obtained. Equal access to the soil is demanded; abolition of imprisonment for debt; a single legislative chamber; repeal of class legislation; the taxation of church property and the property of priests; a lien law and other demands. They close by asserting "that past experience teaches that we have nothing to hope from the aristocratic orders of society; and that our only course to pursue is to send men of our own description, if we can, to the legislature at Albany."[46]

Some forty or fifty labor papers came into existence demanding economic, social and political changes in the established regime.[47] These papers were on the whole more advanced and aggressive than many of the pitiful, conserva-

[45]McMaster, "History," Vol. V, pp. 102-3; Doc. Hist. Amer. Indus. Soc., Vol. V, pp. 141-5; Fox, "The Decline of Aristocracy in the Politics of New York," Chap. XII; Commons and Associates, "History of Labor in the United States," I, VI; Groat, "Organized Labor in American History," pp. 29-30.

[46]Doc. Hist. Amer. Indus. Soc., Vol. V, pp. 149-154.

[47]See Doc. Hist. Amer. Indus. Soc., Vols. V, VI, for photographs and lists of these papers.

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tive, apologizing, labor publications of today. In some cities the independent political action of the workers showed surprising strength. In Albany, New York, in 1830, the workers carried four wards out of five and in Troy won another victory. In Philadelphia and other cities they also exercised considerable influence. The independent movement finally died because its active men were not sufficiently clear regarding the problems that faced them and were the prey of professional politicians, their promises and alliances. Yet the workers did great work while their descendants of today in the labor unions are allowing the courts to strip them of the weapons their fathers won. Courts now plunder union treasuries and the private purses of members; they have outlawed the boycott and legalized the blacklist; prohibited aid by sympathetic unions; jailed men for free speech, and in general, declared only such unions legal that contain spineless, unresisting men, who ask nothing, resent nothing and get nothing.

As early as 1830 Frances Wright wrote in the "Free Enquirer" that "What distinguishes the present from every other struggle in which the human race has been engaged, is, that the present is, evidently, openly and acknowledgedly, a war of class, and that this war is universal."[48] Similar declarations of the class struggle may be found in the early labor journals of America at least twenty years before Marx and Engles proclaimed it in Europe in the "Communist Manifesto" of 1848. The political successes of the working class parties in the cities and the election of Ely Moore to Congress from New York in 1834 brought concessions from the dominant parties. Imprisonment for debt was abolished in Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana and Tennessee in 1842 and in Missouri the following year, while a bill in the same year (1843) was defeated in the Michigan Senate.[49] Many states were also enacting lien laws and the common school, open to rich and poor alike, came into existence in spite of the disasters

[48] Doc. Hist., Vol. V, p. 178.
[49] McMaster, "History," Vol. VII, p. 153.

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predicted. In 1840 President Van Buren proclaimed the ten-hour day on public works. Two years later the revolt in Rhode Island known as "Dorr's Rebellion" wrested the suffrage from the ruling classes. Conspiracy trials were becoming less frequent and most of the popular demands of the working class were being enacted into law. The ruling political parties were silent on all these measures but granted them through fear of an uprising of the workers. The workingmen were getting results from a relentless criticism of the sham "rights" that the Revolution had brought.

At the same time it must be admitted that the ruling classes felt more inclined to grant many concessions in proportion as the factory system extended and machinery and immigration gave them an overstocked labor market to draw upon. A higher standard of intelligence is required for machine production than for unskilled manual labor and this fact played a part in modifying the opposition to the public school and other demands of the workers. The question of slavery was also becoming more acute and the more shrewd retainers of the ruling classes in the Northern states saw an advantage in extending the suffrage to the workers. By skillful appeals to, and patriotic pleadings with, a ballot-armed working class, this additional voting power could be used against the Southern slavers who had largely controlled the departments of government since its organization. The Southern masters shared this control with the Northern masters but always insisting that the slave-owning interest should be paramount.

Yet it remains a fact that what elements of popular rule, culture, economic and social progress that have come down to us have their origin in the struggles, demands and sacrifices of the workingmen during the first half century of the Republic. The passing of the barbarous penal codes, of conspiracy trials, and other ancient abuses are also due to the persistent struggle of the workers of that period. The records of that struggle, their official journals, the proceedings of their organizations and fragmentary ac-

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counts in contemporary newspapers form an interesting contrast with the public press of their opponents. A study of the latter will show that the wealth, brains and culture of the time were enlisted in behalf of the old wrongs which were finally given up only when they could no longer be retained. Yet history has not given credit to the working class for its achievements and its struggles are hardly known.[50]

The workers were engaged in the struggle of clearing society of the colonial privileges that the nineteenth century inherited, removing the obstacles to the development of unity and acquiring weapons that would enable them to contest for a better life as civilized human beings. They won this status for their sons, handing to the latter the public school, freedom of speech, press and assemblage; manhood suffrage and the right to organize as a class.

The westward movement of the people has ended on the shores of the Pacific and in the ice floes of northern Alaska. Capitalist development has followed the workers to the Pacific Coast and is creeping after the fugitives who sought escape near the Arctic Circle. It is even hunting out the mountain folk of the South, slowly destroying their primitive simplicity as the railroad, telegraph and factory system invade their retreats. It is also transforming the Southern tier of states into an image of the sweatshop North and the bankruptcy of the Southern politicians is beginning to penetrate the minds of Southern workers. The mountain folk and stranded "poor whites" are coming under the control of the monstrous industrial system that enslaves the sellers of labor power and from this development will come the solidarity and class unity that will release the workers from class rule in all its forms.

[50] McMaster, in his "Acquisition of the Political, Social and Industrial Rights of Man in America," gives many facts regarding this long working class struggle, yet in spite of the conclusions the facts suggest, he continually refers to the modification or passing of each abuse as the working out of the theory of the "Rights of Man."

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Chapter X

An Era of Violence

From the beginning of the Republic there was a fundamental antagonism between capitalist North and planter South that was to terminate in one of the bloodiest wars of the century. The first half-century consisted of a truce, although it was an armed truce in the sense that each was alert in defense of its interests. The official classes of the North opposed any discussion of the "peculiar institution" of the South. In the words of Wendell Phillips, the North was "choked with cotton dust" from the slave plantations. Every traveler who came to America was astounded at the anomaly of slavery on the one hand and the boasting of "our free institutions" on the other.

In the South intensive cotton culture was fast exhausting the fertility of the soil. The bloody struggle in Kansas was a contest for new slave territory. A raid on Nicaragua and a threat to annex Cuba were prompted by the same need. The mountain region of the South provided no place for the slave economy on its sterile hillsides and its population was hostile to slavery. Various circumstances, however, had combined to postpone the South's discovery of the unfitness of her economic system.

The presence of slavery was a deterrent to white immigration into the Southern states and encouraged emigration of their unmoneyed whites into the free states, or withdrawal apart into the mountain region of the southern Appalachians, whither the competition of the plantation method of production could not pursue them.[1]

There was a frank recognition, North and South, of the class antagonism between the two sections. Speaking to northern representatives, Senator Hammond of South Caro-

[1]Semple, "American History and Its Geographic Conditions," p. 281.

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lina said in the Senate on March 4, 1858, that "your whole hireling class of manual laborers and 'operatives,' as you call them, are essentially slaves. The difference between us is, that our slaves are hired for life. . . . Yours are hired by the day . . ." If they knew the secret of the ballot box "your society would be reconstructed, your government overthrown, your property divided."

During the last thirty years of the slave regime eminent publicists and professionals worked out a somewhat vague philosophy of class rule for reconciling the dominant classes of the opposing sections. In the North Chancellor Harper wrote in 1837 that

The exclusive owners of property ever have been, ever will, and perhaps ever ought to be the virtual rulers of mankind. . . . It is the order of nature and of God that the being of superior faculties and knowledge, and therefore of superior power, should control and dispose of those who are inferior. It is as much the order of nature that men should enslave each other as that animals should prey upon each other.

This northern view was met by a view in the South expressed by Senator Hammond in the middle forties. The substance of this was that instead of the South abolishing slavery the latter should be taken as a model for northern capitalism. He believed that capitalists "should become the owners of their laborers and as such be compelled to clothe and feed them decently; while in the West the public lands should be parceled out in great estates and tilled by the landless poor bound in perpetuity to the soil."[2]

In the campaign of 1856 the Republican party distributed a document including a reprint of a South Carolina paper expressing this southern view. In part it read:

The great evil of northern free society is that it is burdened with a servile class of mechanics and laborers unfit for self-government, and yet clothed with the attributes and powers of citizens. Master and Slave is a relation as neces-

[2]Becker, "The United States, An Experiment in Democracy," pp. 196-197.

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sary as that of parent and child; and the Northern States will yet have to introduce it. Slavery is the natural and normal condition of the laboring man, whether white or black.[3]

However, other forces than the opinions of these men North and South were to settle the issues between them. Through immigration and natural increase of the population the North was filling up rapidly and expanding westward while railroads and canals were binding it together into a solidarity of purpose and economic cohesion. Every decennial increase of population increased the northern membership in Congress and since the admission of Missouri as a State in 1820 the slave states had struggled to retain a balance of power in the Senate by demanding the admission of a slave state with every admission of a "free" state to the Union.

The white ruling class of the South was to pay the penalty of relying upon agriculture alone as the basis of its rule. Its man power was small compared with the North. It could mobilize only 600,000 men while the northern enlistments for three years' service were 2,326,304, nearly four times the total of southern enlistments. The South had no navy and the North did, thus insuring a blockade of southern ports. The South had no armory to turn out muskets of the pattern then used; no machine shop for converting a muzzle-loading rifle into a breech-loader; no foundries to cast a modern gun; no locomotive or car shops in which cars could be built or repaired. Its dependence upon the North and Europe for these things and even for much of its pork, corn and wheat was fatal. Even the materials for explosives were so lacking that women were urged to save their chamber lye for its chemicals and farmers were forbidden by law to burn corn cobs in order that potash and soda might be extracted from them for making gunpowder. Having confined herself practically to the production of one staple, cotton, the South was doomed.

The white aristocracy through various devices often

[3]Carlton, "Organized Labor in American History," p. 147.

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managed to save their skins in the war, finding soft places for themselves or their sons in the government or managing to be placed back of the firing lines. The Confederate Congress, made up of slave owners and their lawyers, passed a series of acts exempting all owners of twenty slaves from military service, later reducing the number to ten. By dividing their slaves among their sons the more wealthy slave owners secured exemption for them.

Many poor whites deserted. General Early's cavalry, "being mostly men of property," were on furlough when northern troops advanced on Charlottesville and the poor whites "declined to fight in defence of the property of their rich and absent neighbors."[4]

In the North after volunteer enlistments in the Union army fell off a draft act of Congress enabled anyone who could pay $300 to a substitute to secure exemption from military service. This was a small sum to the rich man who could afford to purchase a substitute for himself or his sons. The act led to the "draft riots," a series of bloody encounters in which the property loss in New York City was estimated at $1,200,000 and the loss of life at from 400 to 500.[5] So far as the workers were concerned the miltiary legislation in both sections was designed to throw the human sacrifice of the war upon them.

The attitude of the organized masses towards the war was not uniform. There was some fraternization between the organized workers of both sections and protests and resolutions were adopted in favor of preserving the Union of the states. A national convention of unions met in Philadelphia in February, 1861, and adopted resolutions in favor of the Union while a mass meeting of workers in Boston issued an address attacking the Abolitionists, urging "our brethren at the South to deal with their traitors at home," and ascribing the threat of war to "politicians and office seekers," North and South, who had "deceived and be-

[4]Calhoun, "Social History of the American Family," II, Chap. XIV.
[5]See Schluter, "Lincoln, Labor and Slavery," Chap. VII, for an excellent account of the draft riots.

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trayed" the people. One union in Philadelphia enlisted all its members "until the Union is safe or we are whipped."[6] What is apparent in the action of the organized masses is a lack of understanding of the economic forces and the unripeness of the labor movement.

The labor history of this period, however, would not be complete without a reference to Abraham Lincoln and his relations to the working-class as well as the origin of the Republican party. Prominent leaders in the labor movement of the thirties and forties played an important part in forming the first organizations of the Republican party. George Henry Evans, editor of labor papers at various periods from 1829 to 1844, had been active in the radical wing of the workers, Alvin E. Bovay and Horace Greeley were converts to Evans's land program embodied in the platform of the National Reform Union of 1844. Both Evans and Bovay had also been active in the Workingmen's Party of New York and the latter is credited with having brought together the first group of men under the name of the Republican party at Ripon, Wisconsin, in 1854. These working class leaders, together with various anti-slavery elements, organized the party that overthrew slavery and which later became a reactionary party of capitalism.[7]

Lincoln was the noblest product of this early stage of capitalism. In some respects he transcended the epoch in which he lived. The son of a frontier laborer, he was reared in a section that was suspicious of the capitalism of the East and that feared the westward expansion of slavery. When President he was made a member of a Republican Workingmen's Club of New York and on March 21, 1864, he received a committee of the organization. Accepting the membership tendered him, Lincoln addressed the committee, warning the workers against efforts to "place capital on an equal footing with, if not above, labor, in the structure of

[6] Powderly, "Thirty Years of Labor," pp. 46-47.

[7] Commons, "Labor and Administration," Chap. IV. See also Documentary History of American Industrial Society. VII. Introduction.

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government." A splendid note of international solidarity was also expressed in these words:

The strongest bond of sympathy, outside of the family relation, should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindreds.

In the same year he had some correspondence with the First International in London. Powerful interests were at work in England to recognize the Southern Confederacy which induced Karl Marx and other Socialists to mobilize the organized workers in great demonstrations in London and other cities in favor of the northern cause. It was the resolutions adopted at these meetings and sent to Lincoln, all of them bearing the impress of Marx's literary style, that formed the subject of this correspondence. Full credit has has not yet been awarded the radical and Socialist workers of England for their support of Lincoln as against their own ruling classes.[8]

The war served as a hothouse for the stimulation of industry. The grafting, swindle and chicane of this period are notorious. Many of the "self-made men" of the follow in era gathered their original accumulation during the Civil War. Wages rose but prices rose faster and profiteers made enormous gains.

Even before the war closed many capitalists of the North and their agents in the law-making bodies determined upon the destruction of the unions. Bills were introduced in the Legislatures of New York and Massachusetts in 1864 which were designed to destroy the unions. But reaction was not as strong as after the world war. The workers raised such a storm of protest in these states that the bills failed of enactment. However, military forces were employed to break strikes, military commanders issuing orders in a number of strikes which rendered organization by the strikers illegal. In the world war strikers were regarded as "pro-German"; in the Civil War they were re-

[8]The best account of this episode will be found in Schluter's "Lincoln, Labor and Slavery." Chaps. V and VI. This excellent work deserves a wider reading than it has received.

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garded as hostile to the Union and guilty of "treason."[9] In 1863

Employers were wont to appropriate to themselves all or nearly all of the profits accruing from the higher prices, without being willing to grant to the employees a fair share of these profits through the medium of higher wages. . . . A dollar was slowly but surely diminishing in value, and labor engaged in a determined struggle to force wages up, capital to keep them down.

Immigration from abroad was stimulated and proprietors of struck plants often sent agents abroad to recruit strike-breakers. State governments gave their assistance and Congress made legal in this country contracts signed in Europe by prospective emigrants.[10] Not even a war where the Federal Union was at stake could repress the class antagonism inherent in a society under the dominion of capital.

In 1863-1864 anti-union organizations of employing capitalists were formed in Louisville and other cities. In the latter year a movement was initiated from Detroit by owners of various plants for a nation-wide organization of their class to regulate wages and hours. The plan included the organization of an industrial congress of capitalists in given districts to serve as a clearing house for fighting unions, maintaining a black list, regulating hours, and establishing minimum prices.[11]

After the war southern planters and capitalists followed the example set by their northern brethren. In July, 1869, a conference of planters and capitalists met in Memphis to promote immigration. The conference adopted a report stating that "China, especially, is capable of supplying us with a class of laborers peculiarly adapted to our circumstances." The delegates congratulated themselves that "whilst we avail ourselves of the physical assistance these pagans are capable of affording us (we) endeavor at the same time to bring to bear upon them the elevating and

[9]Schluter, op. cit., pp. 210-214.
[10]Fite, "Social and Industrial Conditions During the Civil War," Chap. VII.
[11]Doc. Hist. IV, pp. 99-102.

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saving influence of our holy religion." The statement is reminiscent of the New England dealers in rum, molasses and Negroes. The delegates expected to import the "pagans" from China at $100 per head and estimated wages to be paid from $8 to $12 per month.[21] A shoe manufacturer in North Adams, Massachusetts, also imported 75 Chinese to displace striking members of the Knights of St. Crispin in 1870.[13]

Having "freed the Negro" the Republican leaders organized the "Freedman's Bank" and after collecting the pennies of the blacks it "failed" owing them over $3,000,000. A committee of Congress reported that the books showed a settled purpose to confuse the accounts so as to make them unintelligible. They were mutilated, some leaves were cut out, false entries were made and some leaves pasted firmly together.[14]

The Southern states had been ravaged by sword and fire and their civilization practically destroyed. The overwhelming mass of the people were reduced to beggary. One great family was so dispersed and reduced to poverty that only one remained to "peddle tea by the pound and molasses by the quart, on a corner of the old homestead, to the former slaves of the family."[15]

Despite the frightful economic conditions the reconstruction governments piled up enormous debts. The South Carolina government, for example, cost $1,326,589 for eight years, while the total cost for the 78 years previous was only $609,000. The Republican "statesmen" established a bar adjoining the Senate and drank the choicest liquors at the expense of the wretched population. They charged everything in the way of personal enjoyment to the state, and in the items were most anything from stoves and buckets to saws and coffee mills.[16]

While the Negro was being "freed" these statesmen

[12]Ibid, pp. 80-84.
[13]Ibid, pp. 84-88.
[14]Fleming, "Documentary History of Reconstruction," Vol. I, pp. 389-392.
[15]Ibid, 1 p. 17.
[16]Ibid, Vol. II, pp. 60-69, passim.

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went back to the indentured and vagrancy codes of the colonies for laws fixing the status of the blacks. They were taken up as runaways, rogues, or vagabonds and fined or bound out to masters. The South Carolina code regulated the details of the servant's life by fixing the hours of labor for outdoor service from sunrise to sunset; outlined the labor to be performed from the time of rising until the servant retired at night; gave power to the master to deduct fines from the wages of disobedient servants, and stipulated the form of contract between masters and servants.[17]

Not until June, 1863, was there a revival of the labor press, more than 120 labor journals being established from 1863 to 1873. In that month Jonathan C. Fincher began the publication of "Fincher's Trade Review" at Philadelphia, and within a few years many local papers were being published. Ira Steward, a Boston machinist, began his agitation for the eight-hour day at this period, and in 1866 the National Labor Union placed this demand at the head of its program. It also recommended that a national labor party be organized and the following year resolved that the workers "organize themselves into a National Labor Party." Similar action was taken in 1868. The following year a labor party in Massachusetts elected 21 representatives to the Legislature and one State Senator. These attempts at political action were mere flashes of class consciousness. One sentence in the program of 1866 read: "The tools to those that have the ability and skill to use them, and the lands to those that have the will and heart to cultivate them."

However, this movement soon degenerated into a refuge of reform quacks hawking all sorts of currency measures, yet William H. Sylvis, its leader, was the first American to recognize the importance of relations with the European workers. Sylvis was in correspondence with the International and in 1869 A. C. Cameron was sent as a delegate to the Basle Congress. In an address to the workers of the

[17] Ibid, Vol. I, pp. 283-310.

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United States, written by Cameron and distributed in 1867, the organization affirmed that *the interests of labor are one; that there should be no distinction of race or nationality; no classification of Jew or Gentile, Christian or Infidel; that there is but one dividing line—that which separates mankind into two great classes, the class that labors and the class that lives by others' labors.*[18]

The convention of 1872 and the national election of that year witnessed the end of the National Labor Union. The admission of quacks and political adventurers largely contributed to its end. The rise of a craft union signified the end of one period and the beginning of another, but not until the Knights of Labor had shot across the labor firmament like a meteor, only to swiftly decline and drag out a precarious existence in the '90's.

The modern craft union had its origin in the early '50's. It gave special attention to the skilled workers and their interests. High fees, strike benefits, methods of payment, apprenticeship, etc., were the main questions of interest. Arrested in its development during the Civil War it took on its characteristic features after the war. This period *witnessed the distinctly American philosophy of greenbackism and the eight-hour day; the rise of the agitation for the exclusion of Oriental labor; the invention of the trade union label; the first national trade agreement; the establishment of the first government bureau of labor; the organization of the first permanent labor lobby at Washington; the enactment of the first eight-hour legislation and the earliest laws against "conspiracy" and "intimidation."*[19]

The Noble Order of the Knights of Labor, formed by Uriah Stephens in 1869, did not acquire any importance until some four years later. A secret organization, its secrecy was not abandoned until 1881. Organized on the district or city as a basis, taking in all types of labor, with low initiation fees, it had a phenomenal growth. In 1879

[18] Doc. Hist. IX, 158-159.
[19] Commons and Associates, "History of Labor in the United States," II. Chap. III.

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it had but 20,151 members. Its fortunes fluctuated until 1884. Beginning the latter part of this year, there was an enormous rush into the organization. From 989 local assemblies with 104,066 members in June, 1885, the assemblies increased to 5,892 and the members to 702,924 in July, 1886. This was the high tide, for by the end of the year the membership began to decline and by the middle of 1887 had diminished to 510,351. The decline continued and after this year it "lost its hold upon the larger cities with their wage-conscious and largely foreign population, and became an organization predominantly of country people, of mechanics, small merchants, and farmers, an element more or less purely American and decidedly middle class in its philosophy."[20]

Political action was first considered by the Knights in 1879 and to satisfy conflicting views it was decided that local assemblies should take such action as they deemed necessary. In the early '80's attempts were made to commit the Knights to a general movement for political action without success. The organization appealed to the unskilled and semi-skilled and general strikes fostered the idea of class solidarity. Factory and machine production increased rapidly, Bradstreets estimating that one-tenth more wage workers were employed in 1882 than in 1880. Capital invested in machine shops increased two and one-half fold from 1880 to 1890. The '80's were a record decade in immigration, 5,246,613 arriving in 10 years. The frontier practically closed by 1890 and the workers were finally "shut up in the wage system."

Owing to the mixed composition of its membership, including farmers, professional men and various types of utopian radicals, the Knights had no permanent future. Their interest in the neglected unskilled workers were to their credit, but other elements, insisting on co-operative ventures and various "radical" nostrums, made the organization a compound of conflicting views. The rising Amer-

[20] Ibid, p. 423.

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ican Federation of Labor, with its wage-conscious appeal, at least appealed to the wage working class, although it was the skilled workers that received main consideration. Class demarcations became more pronounced with the development of capital and the craft union of the skilled workers naturally supplanted the unskilled-professional-agrarian Knights of Labor.[21]

Here may also be noted a fundamental revolution in politics, law and jurisprudence that followed the reconstruction period. Capital ascended the throne without any rival to contest its supremacy. This was registered in legislation and judicial decisions which surrounded finance and capital with a legal structure of class barriers protecting and enforcing the will of the new rulers. The old brilliant statesmen of the slavery struggle gave way to agents of the railroads, banks and manufacturers. The intellectual personnel of Congress declined as capitalism rose. The shift of power from a ruling oligarchy in the South to the capitalist North was followed by a new school of legislators who *held that all the natural resources of the country should be transferred to private hands as speedily as possible, at a nominal charge, or no charge at all, and developed with dashing rapidity. They also believed that the great intangible social property created by community life, such as franchises for street railways, gas and electricity, should be transformed into private property. They supplemented their philosophy of property by a philosophy of law and politics, which looked upon state interference, except to preserve order, and aid railways and manufacturers in their enterprises, as an intrinsic evil to be resisted at every point, and they developed a system of jurisprudence which, as Senators having the confirming power in appointments and as counsel for corporations before the courts of the United States, they succeeded in transforming into judicial decisions.*[22]

While the process of gathering in the booty of the Civil

[21] Commons, op. cit. Chap. VIII. Exhibits of the ceremonials of the Knights of Labor will be found in Doc. Hist. X.
[22] Beard, "Contemporary American History," p. 53.

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War was going on the class antagonism burst upon the new epoch with startling vividness. The panic of 1873 continued as an industrial depression for five or six years with acute suffering for thousands of workers. Repeated reductions in wages provoked frequent strikes and a second reduction on the railways brought a strike on the lines. It spread rapidly in the summer of 1877 and became an uprising in which pitched battles were fought with the militia. The first clash occurred at Martinsburg, W. Va., on July 16th, and soon spread to 17 states. In some cases the troops fraternized with the strikers and the militia on the whole was so organized and led that it was unreliable. A force of 600 militia was defeated in Pittsburgh and had to retire from the city.

In St. Louis a mass meeting called by the Socialists elected an executive committee to protect the interests of the workers. The committee assumed control of the city for an entire week and only surrendered its power after "leading citizens," having recovered from their fright, with the aid of the entire police force and several companies of militia ousted the commitee. In Chicago the Socialists also took a leading role in the strike.[28]

From the beginning of this class war the sympathy of the masses was with the strikers. Railway corporation steals were fresh in the minds of many. The middle classes, small shopkeepers and tradesmen, had not yet come under the sway of the rising oligarchs of finance and capital. The daily organs of opinion had not become vassals of the parvenue rich. These dailies were overwhelmingly with the strikers and reflected the opinion of the middle classes and workers.

"The sentiment of the business men," wrote Rhoades, "and the natural sympathy of the laborers and mechanics in every factory were reflected in every newspaper which almost unanimously supported the strike." This spectre of a huge industrial upheaval over a large area of territory,

[28]Hillquit, "History of Socialism in the United States," Revised Edition. pp. 199-203.

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the sympathy expressed for it by the masses, and the unreliability of the military organization, brought to the ruling classes knowledge that the new regime required stable police and military powers. From this period dates the reorganization of the state militias, the New York Seventh being taken as a model of military organization. It was composed of men of "character and social standing, owners of property or presumably inheritors of it."[24] It is significant that the building of strong armories in the large cities dates from this strike. Courts also responded to the new situation by reviving the old doctrine of malicious conspiracy laws to strangle the unions.[25]

This great struggle was preceded by the Pennsylvania hills tragedy in which the Molly Maguires figured. The Miners' Journal of March 30, 1867, published a list of 50 murders committed in Schuylkill County alone between January 1, 1863, and March 30, 1867, a period during which unionism was practically unknown. On the other hand little was heard of lawlessness between October, 1868, and December, 1871, which was the period of the "greatest strength of unionism and of the trade agreement between the anthracite board of trade and the Miners' and Laborers' Benevolent Association." However, crimes became frequent after this period and there is little doubt that some miners, goaded to desperation by intolerable conditions, participated in the criminal acts of the "Mollies." These acts were incited and encouraged by James McParland, a spy. In 1876 fourteen "Mollies" were sent to prison for terms varying from two to seven years and ten were executed.[26] This is the first instance of the employment of the spy and agent provocateur in the unions.

Within a few years after these dramatic episodes of the class struggle a wave of violence swept over many industrial centers. Josiah Warren, of old American stock, was the first American anarchist. In 1827 he opened the first of his

[24]Rhodes, "History of the United States," VIII, Chap. I.
[25]Commons and Associates, "History of Labor in the United States," II. 191.
[26]Commons, etc., op. cit., 181-185.

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"time stores" to vindicate his theory of "labor for labor" and for many years he urged the transference of government activities to private persons.[27]

But Warren's anarchism was of the intellectual type, as was most of the early native anarchism down to the modern period of the organized Anarchist movement. In July, 1881, the "Black International," as it was called, was organized in London and the following October delegates of 14 cities met in Chicago to organize an American section. A bitter struggle had been going on for some years in the Socialist Labor Party with Anarchists who opposed political action. In Chicago an Agitation Committee of the Grand Council of the Armed Organizations issued in December, 1880, a call to "all revolutionists and armed workingmen's organizations in the county" to offer "armed resistance to the invasions by the capitalist class and capitalist legislatures." In New York the same divisons appeared and in the Chicago convention the New York section proved more radical than the Chicago organization. The convention approved the work of the London Congress and endorsed societies which "stand ready to render armed resistance."

The Socialist Labor Party grew weaker with the internal strife and the idea of armed insurrection captivated an increasing number of the members. Designating themselves as the "revolutionary" wing, the militant activity of the force faction captured the organizations in the larger cities of the country. At the Pittsburgh convention held October 19, 1883, the "revolutionary" faction controlled the delegates from St. Louis, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Omaha, and from the West in general, while John Most had among his followers in the East the delegates from Brooklyn, Philadelphia and Baltimore, he representing New York. The convention adopted what is called the "Pittsburgh Manifesto" which for many years remained an authoritative statement of the American Anarchists' creed. Its leading demand read:

[27] Commons, etc., Vol. I, 96-97.

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Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i. e., by energetic, relentless, revolutionary and international action.[28]

In 1884 the struggle with the force advocates divided the Chicago labor unionists into two warring bodies; one the Central Labor Union having 13 unions, and the other, the Amalgamated Trades and Labor Assembly, having 19. The first body maintained cordial relations with the "Black International" and at the end of 1885 it had the largest number of unions affiliated with it. In October of that year it adopted a resolution calling upon the working class to "arm itself" and concluded with the words, "Death to the foes of the human race." In November it entered into the eight-hour agitation. The strike at the McCormick Reaper Works followed the following May, and as a result of the brutal and ferocious assault on the strikers by the police, a protest meeting was called for May 4th in Haymarket Square. A bomb was thrown by some person unknown, seven policemen were killed, some 60 people injured, and a terrible reaction set in.

The trial that followed was a judicial farce, yet in the atmosphere that prevailed the accused men, August Spies, Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden, Albert R. Parsons, Adolph Fischer, George Engel, Louis Lingg, and Oscar W. Neebe, were doomed. Spies, Fischer, Parsons and Engel were hanged on November 11, 1887, Schwab and Fielden received life sentences, Neebe 15 years, and Lingg committed suicide. Six years later Governor John P. Altgeld pardoned the surviving prisoners and issued a scathing indictment of the trial proceedings. Anarchism received a blow from which it never recovered, while the reaction against the workers lasted many years.[29]

In its beginnings the modern Socialist movement was

[28] Commons, etc. Vol. II, 290-298.

[29] Buchanan, "The Story of a Labor Agitator," Chap. X; Hillquit, op. cit. pp. 209-229; Commons, etc., II, 386-394; "The Chicago Martyrs Vindicated," Altgeld's Reasons, etc., New York, 1894. Parsons's "The Famous Speeches of the Eight Chicago Anarchists in Court." Chicago, 1910.

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largely led by refugees from Europe, most of them Germans, who also participated in the agitation against slavery. The struggle with violence in the United States had its parallel with a similar struggle abroad in the International Workingmen's Association, founded by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels in London in 1864. Because of this strife the headquarters were moved to New York in 1872. The struggle continuing, it was formally dissolved in 1876.

In April, 1874, the second national convention of the American sections was held in Philadelphia with a small attendance. Some New York sections had withdrawn and organized the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party of North America. On April 17, 1876, Socialist delegates to the convention of the National Labor Union at Pittsburgh agreed to hold a conference a few months later at Philadelphia. When the convention assembled in July the American sections of the International, the Social Democratic Workingmen's Party, the Labor Party of Illinois, and the Socio-Political Labor Union of Cincinnati, represesenting nearly 3,000 members, organized the Workingmen's Party of the United States. The following year the name was changed to the Socialist Labor Party of North America. Between 1876 and 1877 some 24 papers supported the Socialist movement, only eight being English organs.[30]

The same year that witnessed the birth of the S. L. P. (1877) brought the organization of the Workingmen's Party of California, which grew out of the anti-Chinese agitation. It carried the city election in San Francisco and succeeded in bringing about a revision of the State Constitution. Dennis Kearney, known as "Sand Lot" Kearney, was the most striking figure in the agitation. In 1886 a Union Labor Party was organized in Wisconsin, supported by the Socialists, and a similar party was formed in New York in the same year which named Henry George, the Single Taxer, for Mayor. In Wisconsin the party's candi-

[30] Faust, "The German Element in the United States," II, 187-198; Commons, etc., op. cit., II, 227-234; Hillquit, op. cit., 182-192.

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dates in Milwaukee for the Legislature and for Congress were elected. In 1892 the S. L. P. made its first venture into a national campaign, its ticket appearing in six states and receiving 21,512 votes.

The main bulk of the workers' protest in the election of that year, however, was cast for the People's Party, which received over a million votes. It was mainly a revolt of the farmers against the low price of wheat and railway extortions; of small capitalists against their organized opponents; of small shippers, traders and producers in alliance with urban workers. Their philosophy has been well characterized by Merriam:

They were, on the whole, on the side of individualism as against Socialism, and democracy as against plutocracy; and on the side of collectivism where necessary to curb monopoly or unfair competition as they conceived it; but not for the type of collectivism implied in the labor theory and ideal of industry administered by the standardized union association of men, in which all stood upon the same level of production and compensation regardless of individual differences in capacity. They were for a progressive income tax, but not for a single tax on land; for an inheritance tax to prevent swollen fortunes, but not for common ownership of capital.[81]

The era of violence, however, had passed. Beginning with the Civil War, it continued after its close for some 10 years with the ruthless extension of capitalism by military force into the ruined South. This was followed by the Molly Maguire episode and the strike upheaval of 1877, in turn stimulating the philosophy of force embraced by the "Black International." It in turn was strangled in Cook County jail in 1887, followed by a period of labor stagna-

[81] Merriam, "American Political Ideas," 1865-1917. p. 20.

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tion, capitalist reaction, and ultra-conservatism in the labor movement as it developed under the auspices of the American Federation of Labor. Not until 1892 was violence revived. It then came to be subsidized as an extra-legal institution by the employing class, beginning with the Homestead strike of that year and continuing as a weapon of that class through the modern period.

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Chapter XI

The Modern Period

The first annual report of Carroll D. Wright, the Commissioner of Labor, issued in 1886, was devoted to industrial depressions, their causes and remedy. The report revealed a remarkable similarity in the periodical return of these depressions which have convulsed society in the five leading industrial nations, beginning with 1837. These nations include the United States, Great Britain, France, Belgium and Germany. His investigations show a return of these social convulsions about every 10 or 12 years down to the period when he wrote.[1] They have continued to return at these periods since that time, the world war turning the one that had set in, in 1913, into a feverish war "prosperity," only to again lapse into stagnation at the close of 1920.

Of the tremendous wealth productive power accumulated by modern society, Mr. Wright wrote:

The mechanical industries of the United States are carried on by steam and water-power representing, in round numbers, 3,500,000 *horse-power, each horse-power equaling the muscular labor of six men; that is to say, if men were employed to furnish the power to carry on the industries of this country, it would require* 21,000,000 *men; and* 21,000,000 *men represent a population, according to the ratio of the census of* 1880, *of* 105,000,000. *The industries are now carried on by* 4,000,000 *persons, in round numbers, representing a population of* 20,000,000 *only.*[2]

Considering that we had not acquired a population of 105,000,000 until 1920, the tremendous strides made by labor-displacing machinery and the concentration of capital

[1] Wright, First Annual Report, 1886. "Industrial Depressions," Chap. V. See also Hyndman, "Commercial Crises of the Nineteenth Century," New York, 1902.

[2] Wright, op. cit. p. 87. This calculation was based on the census of 1880 which showed a total population of 50,155,783.

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since 1880 may be surmised. There were 355,405 manufacturing establishments in 1899; 216,180 in 1904; 268,491 in 1909; 275,791 in 1914.[3] The largest figure, in 1899, however, included neighborhood industries and hand trades, so that the number of real establishments was less that year than reported. The figures show but a slight increase in the number of establishments from one period to another. A calculation of the flat averages of the returns in all leading industrial lines also "shows that in thirteen leading lines of industry in the United States, the average manufacturing plant, in the 60 years from 1850 to 1910, multiplied its capital by more than 39, its number of wage-earners by nearly seven and the value of its output by more than 19." The size of the average plant also increases. "Million-dollar output plants producing 38 per cent. of the country's output in 1904 were producing nearly 48 per cent. in 1909."[4]

It is in this period of remarkable concentration of industry, expansion of capitalist control, and accumulation of great aggregations of capital, with its menace of oligarchy, that the American Federation has functioned and developed. While a post-bellum revolution was transpiring, the A. F. of L. remained what it was at its beginning—a loose federation of unions composed largely of the skilled, resting upon the old craft basis, and maintaining policies formed in the early eighties. While the great magnates of capital were breaking down the old trade demarcations, consolidating industrial plants, abolishing old methods and processes; experimenting, changing, the A. F. of L. clung to its old traditions and methods. With the result that, following the end of the world war, the old organization found its powerful enemies entrenched in industry, trade, Congress, the legislatures, the courts, the schools and press, while tremendous blows were rained upon all organizations of the workers, leaving them all but prostrate and struggling for the sheer right to survive.

[3] "Statistical Record of the Progress of the United States, 1800-1920," p. 790. Department of Commerce, Washington, 1920.

[4] Jenks, "The Trust Problem," Revised and Enlarged Edition, 1917. See also Ogg, "National Progress, 1907-1917," Chap. V.

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Having its origin in 1881 with about 50,000 members, it slowly increased to more than 200,000 in 1891. Not until 1900 did it make any sharp advance in membership, in spite of more than a decade of tremendous industrial growth and consolidation. In that year it showed an increase from nearly 350,000 in 1899 to nearly 600,000 in 1900. Four year later it reached 1,650,000, followed by some losses until 1911 when there was a steady increase down to the outbreak of the world war. The war years of 1917, 1918 and 1919 revealed sharp increases, the figures for the respective years being 2,350,000; 2,700,000, and a little over 3,050,000. The membership reported in 1920 was a little over 4,000,000.

The record is a poor one when contrasted with the British unions. In 1920 the membership of the unions in the United Kingdom, in a population of nearly 48,000,000, was over 6,000,000, representing over 12 per cent. of the census population and including probably 60 per cent. of all the adult male manual workers.[5] The A. F. of L., with but 4,000,000 workers organized in a population of 105,000,000 has less than 4 per cent. organized. To equal the record of the British workers it should have nearly 12,000,000 workers organized. The period of its greatest increase in membership is also the period of its alliance with the governing parties in support of the war and these war years, with their "social peace," immediately precede the greatest assaults ever made upon organizations of the workers in any country.

The A. F. of L. purchased temporary immunity from assault during the war and its leading officials indulged in "patriotic" attacks against all other organizations that refused to support the war. But it only deferred an assault upon its own members to a later period. It again enforced by its experience the historic lesson that the organized working class cannot contract for service in behalf of imperialism without bringing swift retribution.

[5]Webb, "The History of Trade Unionism," Revised Edition, 1920, pp. 472-473.

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The history of the A. F. of L. is largely identified with its President, Mr. Samuel Gompers, who, except for the one year of 1894, has headed the organization since 1886. Holding aloof from the Henry George campaign in that year, Mr. Gompers nevertheless said that he believed "with the most advanced thinkers as to ultimate ends, including the abolition of the wage system."[6] In fact, his opponents just prior to the convention of 1881 inserted in a Pittsburgh paper a statement that Gompers represented the Socialist element and at the next convention, 1882, speaking to a single tax resolution, he said that "it is not the ownership of land that should be fought, but the doings of the capitalists we are organized to oppose."

However, Mr. Gompers' Socialism appears never to have been more than an academic sympathy for the Socialist movement. The convention of 1883 ordered that a committee attend the conventions of the two leading political parties and demand that their platforms include approval of an eight-hour law, the incorporation of trade unions, and the establishment of a bureau of labor statistics. The legislative committee sent letters to the Republican and Democratic National Committees in 1884, which were never answered.[7] This was the beginning of a begging policy which the A. F. of L. later systematized and finally formulated into a regular practice.

The eighties were years of feverish industrial expansion, a large increase in the class of skilled and semi-skilled labor; the shifting of population from the country to the city; a wide extension of the industrial market; rapid introduction of machinery; the organization of industrial pools; the rapid exhaustion of the public lands; a heavy increase in immigration; an industrial depression from 1883 to 1885 accompanied with a general fall in wages; numerous boycotts and strikes, culminating in the great railway strike on the Gould lines in 1885, and the phenomenal growth of the Knights of Labor. By 1890 the workers were enclosed

[6]Beard, "A Short History of the American Labor Movement," p. 105.
[7]Commons, etc., II, pp. 318-331.

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within the wage system by the exhaustion of the free lands which for generations had served as a refuge for the more rebellious masses of the industrial centers.

The policy of squandering the public lands was a matter of protest by labor unions from their beginning. From settlement times there were large land holdings. The first Congress in 1796 permitted sales at public auction at not less than $2.00 per acre and not less than 640 acres to be sold at one time. This act and those passed in 1785 and 1800 discriminated against the worker with small funds, but in 1820 the minimum price was fixed at $1.25 per acre and the minimum amount to be sold to one purchaser was reduced to 80 acres. The industrial East favored high prices for government land, as this policy tended to keep the workers in the populated centers and to keep wages low.

The first labor parties in the late twenties took up the land question, demanding more equitable terms for acquiring land. In 1833 the workers of New York City demanded that the "remaining public lands should forever continue to be the public property of the nation." The National Reform movement in 1844 demanded that these lands be apportioned in small allotments to actual settlers. The National Labor Congress, 1866, complained that 800,000,000 acres of public lands had been legislated into the hands of a few hundred men who "already assume a haughty and insolent tone and bearing towards the people and government, as did the patricians of ancient Rome."[8] In the A. F. of L. convention of 1881 a resolution declaring that railroad grants should be forfeited where contracts had not been fulfilled, and the reclaimed lands reserved for actual settlers, was ruled out of order. No important action was taken by the annual convention in the eighties on this question which had occupied a prominent place in the programs of all the earlier labor unions.

In spite of the land jobber, the many frauds and the terms favoring land speculators, many thousands of dis-

[8] Carlton, "Organized Labor in American History," Chap. V; Becker, "The United States, an Experiment in Democracy," Chap. VI.

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contented workers settled on public lands. Were it not for this refuge the Atlantic Coast regions would have developed the social and industrial conditions of Europe by the close of the nineteenth century; the organized masses would likely have had a clearer vision of their historic mission; a powerful Socialist movement would have challenged the whole basis of the regime of capitalism, and industrial solidarity would have long ago displaced the bargaining and wage consciousness of the organized workers. This land refuge drained the industrial centers of their most venturesome spirits and by a process of natural selection left behind the more docile and conservative to organize the unions of labor. The Socialists, with their intellectual training, labored under the handicap of an alien origin, rendering them suspects of the native conservative unionists whose mental concepts were a compound of old American traditions and agrarian reforms. The alien prejudice and access to free lands arrested the development of a vigorous and progressive labor movement. When the A. F. of L. had acquired a settled status and increased membership, its conservatism had become a fixed habit and its form of organization made it difficult for any marked changes of policy to get a hearing.

A dispute with the Socialist Labor Party, beginning in 1890, when the Central Federation of Labor of New York was refused a charter because it seated delegates of the S. L. P., developed into bitter warfare when the latter retaliated by organizing the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance in 1895 as a rival to the A. F. of L. From that time to the present Mr. Gompers has maintained uncompromising hostility to Socialists and Socialist organizations.

The maintenance of the policy of appealing to the generosity of Congress for legislation, beginning in 1886, continued with few tangible results. In 1885 it had urged its members to "give cordial support to the independent political movements of the working class," but nothing came of this. After having suffered numerous strike disasters the movement for political action became so strong in the convention of 1893 it adopted a platform which included

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famous plank 10 in favor of "the collective ownership by the people of all the means of production and distribution" and urged that delegates to the next convention be instructed regarding this. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 2,244 to 67.

In considering this program the following year, only the bakers appear to have rejected it in its entirety. Seventeen national unions, 11 state federations and 8 central labor unions adopted the program. This is only a partial list and considered in relation with the convention vote of the previous year the membership was evidently in favor of a more progressive political policy. Prominent leaders, however, led in the attack on the program in the convention of 1894 and many delegates of unions which had endorsed it voted against it.[9] It was defeated and the A. F. of L. has since that time continued its begging policy.

But within ten years many lost strikes and the menacing attitude of Congress, legislatures, courts and organized capitalist associations again brought politics to the front. Beginning with 1906 Mr. Gompers began to go to Congress with a "Bill of Grievances" and has repeated this every four years since. In each instance he has followed it by supporting the Democratic party. But it became evident that he neither helped that party nor injured its chief rival. That party was defeated in 1908. It was successful in 1912 in electing Woodrow Wilson, but it polled 100,000 less votes that year than it did in 1908, showing that it was the split in the Republican party that was responsible for Wilson's election. The latter was successful in 1916 on a "peace" issue which was soon repudiated, and although Mr. Gompers supported the Democratic party, in 1920 it suffered the most disastrous defeat in its history. It became evident to the dullest that the political policy of the A. F. of L. had no influence whatever with its own membership. At a conference of the unions in Washington, in February, 1921, another "Bill of Grievances" was adopted.

The backwardness in membership compared with the

[9]Commons, etc., op. cit., II, 509-514.

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total population; its conservative outlook; its prejudice against contact with the labor organizations of Europe, and its futile political striving are in part accounted for above by certain historical considerations. Many of its national and local organs maintain a strict censorship against opinions not of the official stamp. It has shut itself within national frontiers, except for its conferences with Latin American unions and these it has sought to shape after its own image. With its provincial outlook it has developed a psychology that can only be described as "union chauvinism."

This is amazingly apparent in a book[10] published by the A. F. of L. in 1919. A large volume containing much of historical value regarding the development of trade unions, it is replete with chauvinist boasting. Many speeches in A. F. of L. conventions are regarded as having "marvelous literary merit and economic value" (p. 3); labor unions "are the only organizations on earth" that have the "true mission" of serving the workers (p. 4); the book itself is praised as "the most complete labor history in existence" (p. 4); the A. F. of L. "represents the first labor movement of any country to organize on fundamental principles" (p. 5); its legislative work "has been more successful than that of any country" (p. 7); (despite Mr. Gompers' repeated reports of failure for 15 years!); the "greatest legislative victory secured by labor" (p. 19) was the Clayton Act, later wiped out by the Supreme Court; "Samuel Gompers is a world character" and "Frank Morrison is secretary of the greatest labor movement in the world" (p. 22); the American Federationist "since its first issue has contained no statement that has been successfully refuted" (p. 15), etc., etc.[11]

[10] "American Federation of Labor History, Encyclopedia Reference Book," Washington, 1919.

[11] See also Mr. Gompers' "Labor and the Common Welfare," 1919, and "Labor in Europe and America," 1910. These volumes are filled with the same boasting. A particularly glaring offense is the report of James W. Sullivan, an A. F. of L. representative and member of a Commission of the National Civic Federation to study the labor situation in Great Britain and France. The insufferable egotism of this report, its boasting of American superiority, its attempt to belittle the movements in France and Great Britain, are obvious as well as its display of bad manners. The report may be found in "The Labor Situation in Great Britain and France," New York, 1919.

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A recent author, writing before the great collapse of the old union policies, which became evident following the election of 1920, observed that "Although the wage earners constitute a large and increasing percentage of the electorate of the nation, their influence upon legislation in recent years has been less potent than in the twenties and thirties of the last century."[12] An impartial study of the early history of unionism compels this admission.

Going back to the last decade of the nineteenth century one will perceive a shift in the tactics of violence from the workers to the organized capitalists beginning with the Homestead strike of 1892. This bloody struggle was due to the growing policy of the larger magnates of industry recruiting professional strikebreakers and spies as hired mercenaries to defeat strikes. The Homestead strike dramatized the new era of violence in which warfare on the capitalist side assumed the character of extra-legal methods. often with the acquiescence of public officials and the daily organs of opinion.[13] The transition from the great railroad strike of 1877 was marked. It was evidence of the passing of power from the small merchants and business men to the higher plutocracy that was consolidating into giant combinations of capital and finance, hovering like so many monstrous shapes over legislatures, courts and Congress, and acquiring a dominion over the economic and social life of the nation such as the slave owners never dreamed of possessing.

Two years later the railroad managers had underwritten this professional violence to defeat the strike of the American Railway Union. The latter had been organized with the view of taking in all railroad workers and to avoid the anomaly of one section of the workers striking while other sections remained at work. The A. R. U. strike revealed the almost complete passing of the old independent journal. Henceforth the press became, with few exceptions,

[12] Carlton, "Organized Labor in American History," pp. 250-251.

[13] See Hunter, "Violence and the Labor Movement," Chap. XI, for the subsidizing of armed mercenaries and spies by the great corporations of this period.

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merely an agency for guarding the material interests of the American dynasts of finance and capital.

In the A. R. U. strike there was also an ill-concealed alliance between government officials and the railway managers. Some 3,600 deputy marshalls "were selected by and appointed at request of the General Managers' Association, and of its railroads. . . . While operating the railroads they assumed and exercised unrestricted United States authority when so ordered by their employers," reads a paragraph in the report of President Cleveland's strike commission.[14] The policy of hiring private spies and armies became a fixed practice and few large industrial struggles since these two great strikes have been without them. Eugene V. Debs, leader of the A. R. U. strike, who also became the most prominent Socialist in the United States, was one of the earliest victims of "government by injunction." Debs and six other officials were sentenced to prison for "contempt of court."[15]

The time was not opportune for the winning of strikes. The financial panic of 1893 continued as the most acute period of industrial stagnation of the century. Beginning with the failure of the Philadelphia and Reading Railway Company, on February 20, 1893, with a capital of $40,000,000 and a debt of more than $125,000,000, this was followed by the crash of banks and industrial institutions all over the nation. Prof. Noyes, in his "Forty Years of American Finance," estimated that the commercial failures alone in 1893 were three times as numerous as those of 1873, and the aggregate liabilities involved were fully 50 per cent. greater.

Hundreds of thousands of workers in the winter of 1893-1894 were wholly destitute and the depression dragged out over a number of years. In 1894 a "new jacquerie" appeared on the scene in bands of the unemployed marching

[14] "Report on the Chicago Strike," United States Strike Commission, 1894, p. XLIV.

[15] See Karsner, "Debs: His Authorized Life and Letters," New York, 1919, for the career of this noted humanist and Socialist.

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across the continent to Washington seeking relief. In the spring one band sent out from Massillon, Ohio, under "General" Coxey; a second from Los Angeles, California, under "General" Frye, and a third from San Francisco, under "General" Kelly. The bands increased in numbers as they marched across the country, but only a few hundred were left to march into Washington. There Coxey and some of his lieutenants were arrested for walking on the grass of the Capitol lawns and the marching hosts disappeared. Nevertheless, this march of ragged, hungry and unemployed workers dramatized the frightful social contrast inseparable from developing capitalism. It could no longer be denied that the United States contained a definite and well-defined proletariat.

The violence of 1886 had also followed upon a wave of industrial depression which began in 1882, but the stagnation was receding at the time of the Haymarket tragedy and was passing by the end of the year. Yet the reaction against Socialism and labor unionism, as a result of the Haymarket affair, and the drift of the organized masses to a definite conservative policy where many had been open-minded regarding independent political action, is evident from the figures of union membership. In 1886, the membership was nearly 150,000. Despite the recovery from the industrial depression following that year, the increase in membership was slow. When the panic of 1893 burst upon the nation it revealed that in seven years only 100,000 additional members had been added to the unions. Both the organized workers and the Socialist movement paid the penalty for the unfortunate Haymarket tragedy.

In later years, as the conservative habit of the A. F. of L. became fixed, it produced a cheap and mercenary type of labor journalism in hundreds of industrial centers. Petty officials, as proprietors of "union" publications, bartered space to politicians for money and intrigued for public printing contracts and for political office for themselves. Meantime they warned members to avoid "partisan politics" and pointed to the official policy of the national organization.

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On the whole, the rank and file remained satisfied so long as these officials managed to get satisfactory contracts for the unions.

The more restless and impatient of the progressive members of the unions, not large in number at any time, had, however, reached the point in 1905 where they thought that some large sections would respond to the call for a new organization. A call was issued in that year for a conference to meet in Chicago to organize more effectively along industrial lines. However, the response to the convention call was not very encouraging. The Western Federation of Miners, the American Labor Union, the United Metal Workers an a few local organizations were represented. They organized the Industrial Workers of the World. The following year the convention divided into two factions owing to the capture of the convention by the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance. The struggle for control was carried into the courts and the miners withdrew.

In 1907 the surviving organization again "split" over political action, one faction maintaining a precarious existence, with headquarters in Detroit, under the patronage of the Socialist Labor Party; the other, the anti-political wing, with headquarters in Chicago. The latter, the stronger of the two, came into prominence about 1912, when it waged some desperate battles in some textile centers of the East and among the casual workers of the West. Holding the banner of industrialism aloft it, however, has not been very successful in winning the masses to its standard. Its members have also been savagely persecuted by public officials in many states.[16] In its manifesto of 1905 it proclaimed that *Social relations and groupings only reflect mechanical and industrial conditions. The great facts of present industry are the displacement of human skill by machines and the increase of capitalist power through concentration in the possession of the tools with which wealth is produced and distributed.*

[16] Commons, etc., op. cit., II, pp. 523-524; Hillquit, op. cit., pp. 332-338.

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The late Professor Hoxie stated that "The American public has been frightened by the impressionist school of reporters and magazine writers" regarding the I. W. W. Representing a reaction against the conservative policies of the A. F. of L., understanding the need of organization by industry and that the lesser skilled workers should be given special attention, it has not won the allegiance of any great mass of the workers. Like Morgan's raiders, by its dash and daring, "rapidity of movement and sheer audacity," it has given an impression of an organized force out of all proportion to its real strength.[17]

The development of the Socialist movement in the modern period can only be barely mentioned. The break with the A. F. of L. by the Socialist Labor Party in 1895 and the organization of the Socialist Trades and Labor Alliance by the latter was followed by years of bitter recrimination between the Alliance and the S. L. P. on the one side and the A. F. of L. on the other. Because of this policy of the S. L. P. it "split" in 1899, a large faction deserting and in 1901 uniting with the Social Democratic Party in the Unity Convention at Indianapolis in 1901. The S. D. P. was the heir of the American Railway Union. The latter organization had reorganized as the Social Democracy in 1897. A "split" in the latter the following year brought the Social Democratic Party into being with Eugene V. Debs as its most prominent spokesman. It was this organization that met with the insurgent faction at Indianapolis and organized the Socialist Party.[18]

The latter organization is something more than a mere political organization of the workers. It has been a vital force in assisting workingmen in their daily struggles and strikes, helping every organized struggle of the masses, no matter what their union affiliations might be. It gathered

[17]Hoxie, "The Truth About the I. W. W.," Journal of Political Economy, November, 1913.

[18]Readers should consult Hillquit, op. cit.; Hughan, "American Socialism of the Present Day"; Laidler, "Socialism in Thought and Action"; "The Labor Year Book," Rand School of Social Science, 1916, and succeeding issues for general accounts of the progress of the Socialist movement.

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nearly $10,000 for the anthracite miners' strike in 1902 and nearly $20,000 for the Lawrence textile strikers in 1912. In 1913 it was estimated by the Miners' Magazine that the Socialist Party contributed a fraction over 14 cents a member to the strike of the Michigan miners, while the A. F. of L. contributed but 3½ cents per capita. From 1902 to 1912 an incomplete record shows contributions of about $80,000 to various strike reliefs by the Socialist Party and this does not include contributions of food, clothing, shoes, etc., to strikers and their families. In the great steel strike of 1920 the A. F. of L. called for funds to relieve the distress of the steel strikers. Of the $418,161.14 reported as collected, Socialists and Socialist organizations contributed nearly one-half. Despite this history, Mr. Gompers has frequently attacked the Socialist Party as an enemy of the organized masses and his magazine is closed to any truthful presentation of the facts.

The twentieth century dawned with six big factors facing the working class. The free lands of the frontier had disappeared; the nation was launched upon a career of imperialism; the masses had become resigned to the trustification of industry; a united Socialist movement appeared as a force in national politics; the aristocracy of labor had formed a coalition with the enemies of labor by going into the National Civic Federation, organized in 1901, while the organized manufacturers of the nation waged war upon all labor unions. It would require a separate volume to adequately review subsequent events in the light of these facts, especially the influence of the platonic alliance of certain "labor leaders" with the Civic Federation and their duel with every progressive idea that germinated among the working masses. We can only mention these facts and pass on.

In spite of the historical influences that have chained the American labor movement to the past, recent tendencies indicate an insurgent spirit in the old organizations. The

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development of a Farmer-Labor Party[19] in 1919, with a program similar to that of the British Labor Party, is due to dissatisfaction with A. F. of L. political policies. Some of the large independent and progressive unions like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, with its splendid record of solidarity, its educational activities and cultural development of its members in spite of orthodox union hostility, is another evidence of new life.[20] The defects revealed in the old unionism, revealed in the jealous scrambles by old union officials in the big steel strike of 1919, have also contributed to the new tendency.[21]

The movement for industrial organization and political solidarity proceeds at a slow pace despite the tremendous provocations the organized masses have faced in recent years. But an acceleration of all the progressive forces at work should bring the labor movement abreast of the movement of the workers abroad, combining independent political action with economic solidarity of all workers upon a common program of social freedom and economic emancipation.

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[19]See proceedings, "First National Convention of the Labor Party of the United States," Chicago, 1919.

[20]Budish and Soule, "The New Unionism," New York, 1920.

[21]Foster, "The Great Steel Strike and Its Lessons," New York, 1920; "Report of the Steel Strike of 1919," Commission of Inquiry, Interchurch World Movement, New York, 1920.

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Chapter XII

Conclusion

With the settlement of the issues growing out of the Civil War the capitalist class ceased to be a progressive class in the political sense. It was progressive and radical so long as it faced a slave-owning oligarchy contesting with it for mastery. With this archaic class out of the way the capitalist class became conservative and annexed the dominant party organizations as agencies for its rule. No vital issues remained between the two great parties, and from the middle seventies and through the eighties of the last century campaigns were fought out on the hatreds of the Civil War.

Original thinking ended for the controlling parties when northern capitalism completed its conquest of the South. The destruction of the plantation regime brought a vast territory under the sway of capitalism. The successors of Calhoun and Clay, of Webster and Lincoln, were men of the type of Blaine and Conkling, Quay and Hill. The centralization of capital was registered in a centralization of power in Congress. That body came under the sway of a handful of expert brokers who have maintained what is called the "Congressional machine," an organization dominated by the Speaker, the two floor leaders of the "opposing" parties, and the chairmen of the more powerful and important committees. Political centralization followed economic concentration. The typical capitalist of our time manages neither industry or government. This is left to hired specialists; the technician and efficiency expert, the manager and superintendent in industry, while in politics his interests are looked after by the party brokers and leaders who make this service their profession.

The Civil War also merged the negro and the white laborer into the one class of wage workers, both selling and having nothing to sell but their muscles, tisues and blood in

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order to live. The capitalist class has also come into possession of the greatest powers of wealth-production the world has ever known and these have been organized into powerful combines all more or less related to each other in interest and constituting one mighty ruling class of owners, controlling parties and press, school and platform, and shaping institutions to accord with their interests. Judges, legislators, president and governors often represent, by class or family relationship or association, this all-powerful ruling class and do its will. Each state with its governing powers is the private domain of the controlling combines within its borders, while the naked and shameless debauchery of their political agents are often revealed in every investigation of city and state.

The capitalist system of production has at the same time been developing the crisis that must sweep it out of existence like other historic forms of class rule. The ruling class is unable to prevent the breakdown of the colossal powers in its hands; the collapse comes every ten or fifteen years in the form of an industrial crisis, the last one always more terrible in the suffering and ruin it brings than the one preceding it. Millions are beggared for lack of opportunity to place bread and meat on their tables. Though millions suffer for lack of opportunity to operate the machinery, the owners stand in the background possessing judge, policeman and soldier and with these command the laborers, "hands off!" Unable to manage industry itself the capitalist class will not permit the laborers to enter the factories and relieve their distress.

The opportunities of employment are not owned or managed with regard to human welfare. They are simply agencies for the enrichment of idle capitalists, many of whom never saw the factories they own. When the workers produce more than the owners can sell or the workers buy, the plants are closed and society becomes a stockade; the workers are penned within sight of the billions they produce; within reach of the machinery to produce billions more, and yet are barred from both.

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Even during times of so-called "prosperity" capitalist society is, in the words of Professor Ely, "an imperfect social organism. It moves forward, creaking, and groaning and splashes the blood of its victims over us all. Our food, our clothing, our shelter, all our wealth, is covered with stains and clots of blood." The upstart parvenue rich, many of whose ancestors stole their original accumulations, draw the children of the workers within their factory hells and sweat gold from their tender, helpless little bodies. Their fathers and mothers also sell their labor power for a pittance. The waking hours of the worker are devoted to securing food for his family, and working under such conditions that often deprive him of the bodily vigor, leisure and comfort of the cave-man of the primitive world. Many thousands live in chronic pauperism and slowly rot and die because of lack of nourishment. Protests and strikes of laborers are met with clubs, jails and injunctions. All life, all progress, all institutions, are shaped to serve the wishes of a class that is no more necessary or useful to society today than he who rules the unhappy people of Spain.

This is the civilization that four centuries of progress and achievement in America has given us, and just as our review of the past century has shown that the political parties of that time never at any time mentioned the real issues that concerned the workers, so the dominant parties today have no message for them. The reason for this is apparent. These parties, past and present, are the parties of the ruling classes. Their appeals are based on "patriotism," "morality," "the flag," and other claptrap. They are incapable of understanding that "Love and business and family and religion and art and patriotism are nothing but shadows of words when a man's starving."

They are bankrupt. No one can say worse of them than many who have been with them, learned of their foul practices and witnessed their crimes. Many elections bring

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them into close alliance with the thug and the pimp, and the unfortunate, rotting degenerates clinging to the lowest layers of society. These often come forth from their holes and cellars in American cities and are "rounded up" with funds provided by bankers, merchants, capitalists and other "pillars of society." Thuggery, "booze," and boodle are a necessary part of their work.

This is a natural legacy of the past. From the history of class rule in America nothing better could be expected. But the end is drawing near and the curtain is about to rise on a better and nobler stage of history. The development of the factory system and the concentration of industries draw large masses of workers into workshops working for the same masters, under the same rules and under the same common conditions of servitude. The machine enters the factory and under their very eyes absorbs their skill and throws hosts of them out of employment. Out of their common servitude comes a consciousness of unity and fellowship in the struggle for bread. This solidarity finds its first expression in the trades union where the workers unite to give battle to those who live on their sweat and labor. The workers are forced to unite or go down in defeat as a servile, cringing, degraded class. Pressure from above molds them into a closer unity and class consciousness is born of their contact with each other.

However, when they leave the factory on strike they find that the capitalist has summoned the judge to post an injunction on the factory gates; the mayor to provide him with clubs; the governor to provide him with bayonets and the president to give him Federal soldiers. These officials often obey his commands. The workers have united in the factory and divided at the polls, giving their ballots to one or the other of two parties controlled by the owners of the factory. The party in turn gives its owners the police and military powers necessary to beat the insurgent work-

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ers into submission. The class struggle, ever present in capitalist society, is revealed in all its brutality, and broken heads and weltering bodies attest its grim reality. Unity at the ballot box to secure possession of the legislative, judicial, police and military powers is also revealed *and independent Socialist politics is born.*

Socialism having for its object the industrial and political unity of workingmen, will, when triumphant, restore the magnificent resources of America to the workers. It will transfer to the people all the mills, mines, factories, railways, and all the other powers of wealth-production and distribution to be publicly owned, operated and managed by all in the interest and for the common good of all. Capitalist ownership for capitalist enrichment will be replaced by common ownership in behalf of the useful wealth producers.

The machinery and factory system are both the social achievements of all the workers of the past and present. Each generation has improved the wealth-productive powers of their time and passed them on to their children who performed a like service for the race. These powers incarnate the blood and tears and genius of all the workers that have gone before, and to allow a few idle capitalists and stock gamblers to possess them and juggle with the happiness of millions is a crime against the human race.

Class ownership must give way to the next great change, the change that will place the workers in possession of the governing and industrial powers of today. Co-operative labor in the factories must be supplemented with co-operative ownership and control. Capitalist society itself has developed the framework of the new Socialist society. We do not have to build, but transform. Co-operative social production is displacing individual hand methods in all fields of industry. The owners are simply gamblers on the toil of the workers. Owning sugar stock today they trade it for steel tomorrow; for railway stock the next

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day, and for other stock the next, and so on without end. Many never know the plants the stocks represent, or the process of producing the given commodities within them. As gamblers or idle owners sailing the seas they perform no service of use to mankind. They must go the way of the baron of the crags and the Roman masters when they no longer serve society in a useful capacity.

The response the workers get for their demands is the response every ruling class in history has given to the demands of its victims. "You will overthrow morality, break up the family, destroy religion," and all the other institutions of today. Yet the capitalist class drags all these in the muck and mire and makes a wretched botch of everything it touches. The thinking worker laughs at these pretenses and adds to the number of those who prepare to end the rule of the vulgar parvenues and the servile parrots who sing their praises.

The modern Socialist can well stand erect knowing that the Socialist movement has gathered to itself the scholarship, learning, science and philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In no political gatherings outside of the Socialist movement are the writings of the great philosophers and scientists discussed and appreciated. This movement represents not only the next political, social and industrial advance of mankind, but it also preserves the culture and learning of our time. What use have capitalist parties for the names or writings of Marx, Engels, Huxley, Darwin, Tolstoy, London, Buckle, Ibsen, and the host of others who have enriched the literature of the world? The Socialist movement will hand this rich legacy on to the people of the future while its enemies will only leave the memory of the evil they have done and merit the contempt of mankind.

The final fruition of the workers' struggles in America is not hard to predict. Blunder as we may, go down

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in defeat as often as we will; betrayed by some, deserted by others, and our advance retarded by the timid and faltering, the hour will come when the working class with its new ideals—the greatest known in history—will stand on the summit of the modern world. They will clear the swamps and cesspools of society that remind us ot the past and place the governing powers in the hands of all. Possession of these by all and for all will incarnate in all our institutions the fellowship that today is only found in its ripest form among the long-suffering, organized working class. They will transform every factory into a palace of art and every workshop into a studio where

"ALL WILL BE JOY-SMITHS AND THEIR TASK SHALL BE TO BEAT OUT LAUGHTER FROM THE RINGING ANVIL OF LIFE."

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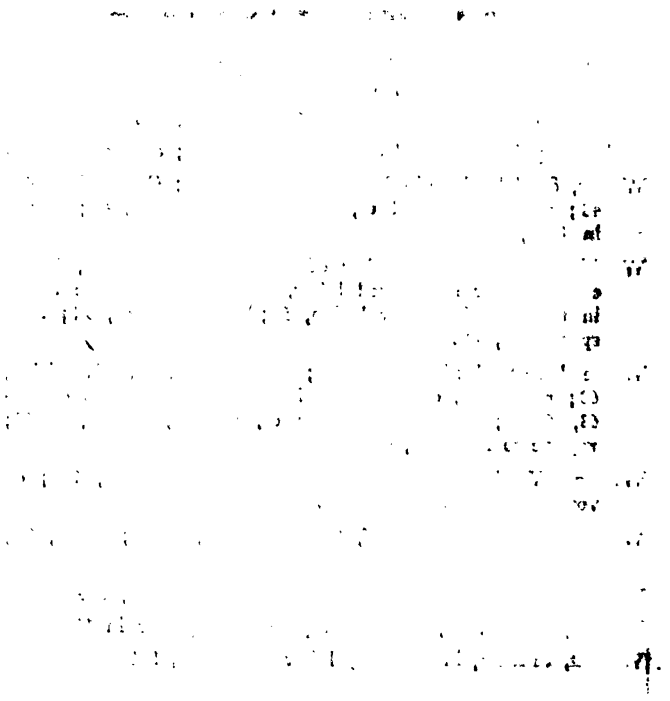

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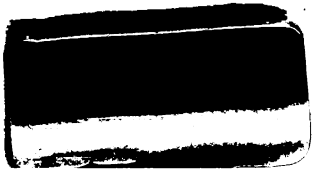

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